NEW TRUE CRIME SPECIAL!

The original real-life mag

Chat

BEHIND THE BIG CRIME

VILE CRIMES AND HOW THEY WERE SOLVED

LONG WAIT FOR THE TRUTH

A traumatic act that rewrote one man's history

HOW MONEY CAN GET YOU FAR IN LIFE... UNTIL YOU GET CAUGHT

FALL FROM GRACE

FROM PRIVILEGE *TO PERVERSION*

40-YEAR MYSTERY

Secrets and lies in Vatican City

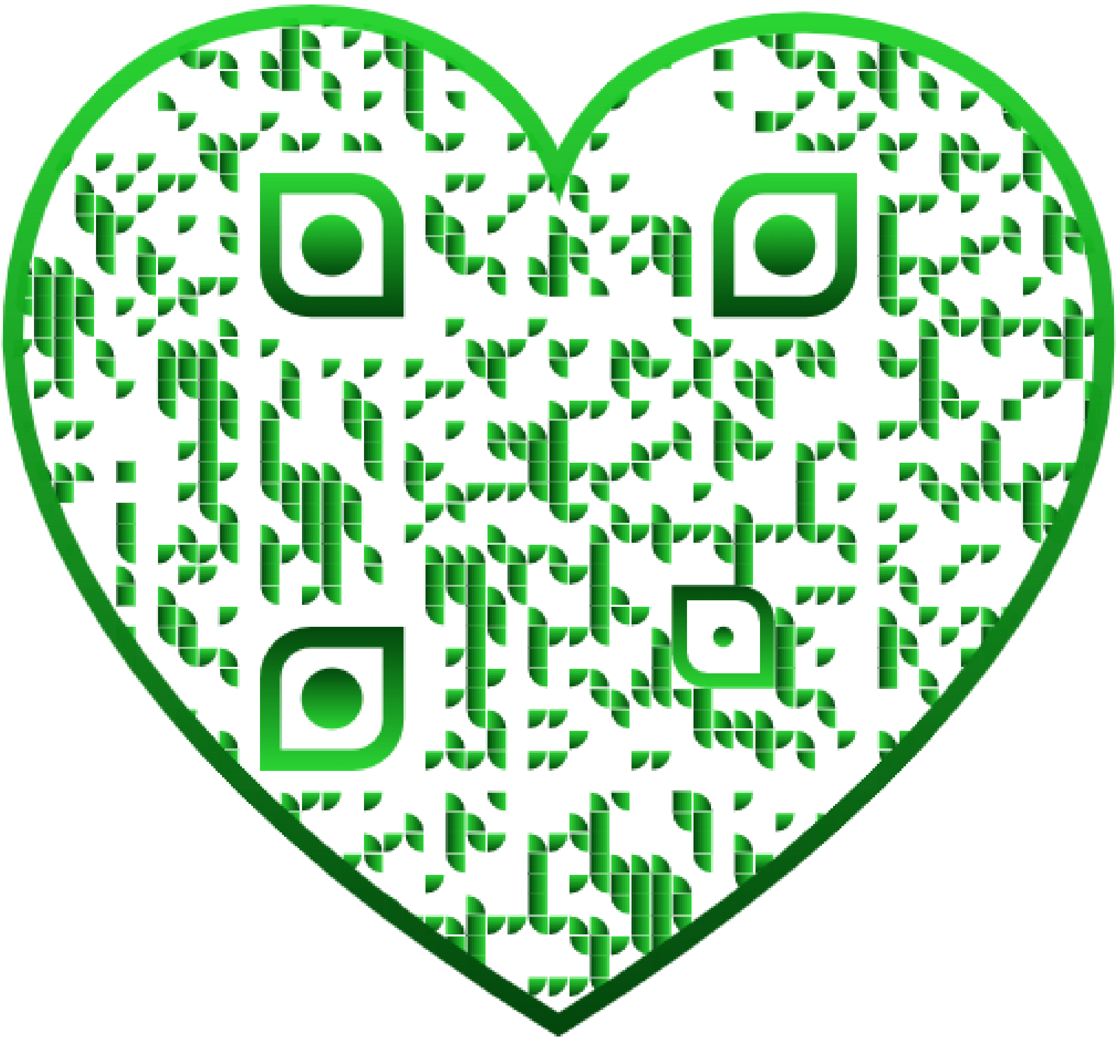
PREDATOR TURNS PREY

She went on holiday to kill – but came home in an urn

Digital Edition

FUTURE

THIRD EDITION



BERGEN COUNTY, N.J.
SHERIFF'S OFFICE
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COTTINGHAM
RICHARD

WELCOME

In this brand-new title from the makers of Chat magazine, we revisit some of the best 'Behind the Big Crime' articles from our archive. We'll delve into the gritty details behind some of the world's most heinous and horrifying crimes, finding out what motivated these conniving criminals. From crime to capture, we'll explore the investigations that led police to apprehend these vile individuals.

WARNING!
SOME FEATURES CONTAIN GRAPHIC DETAIL

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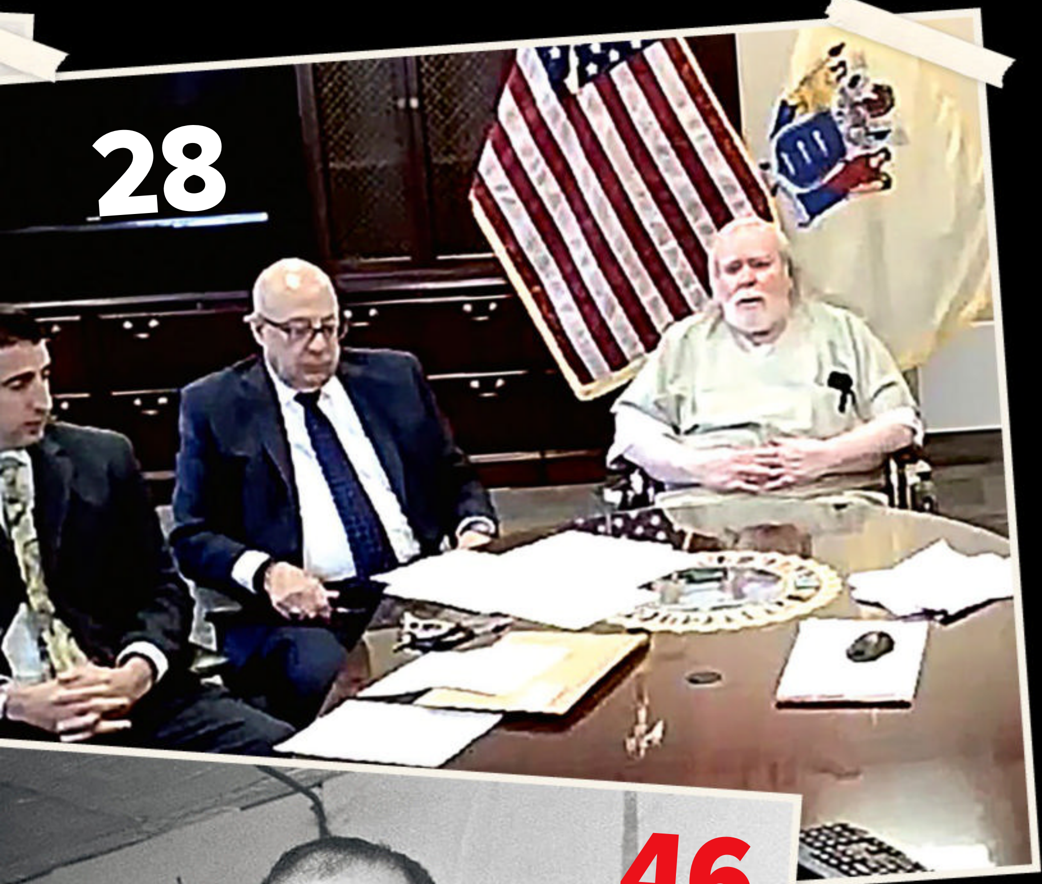

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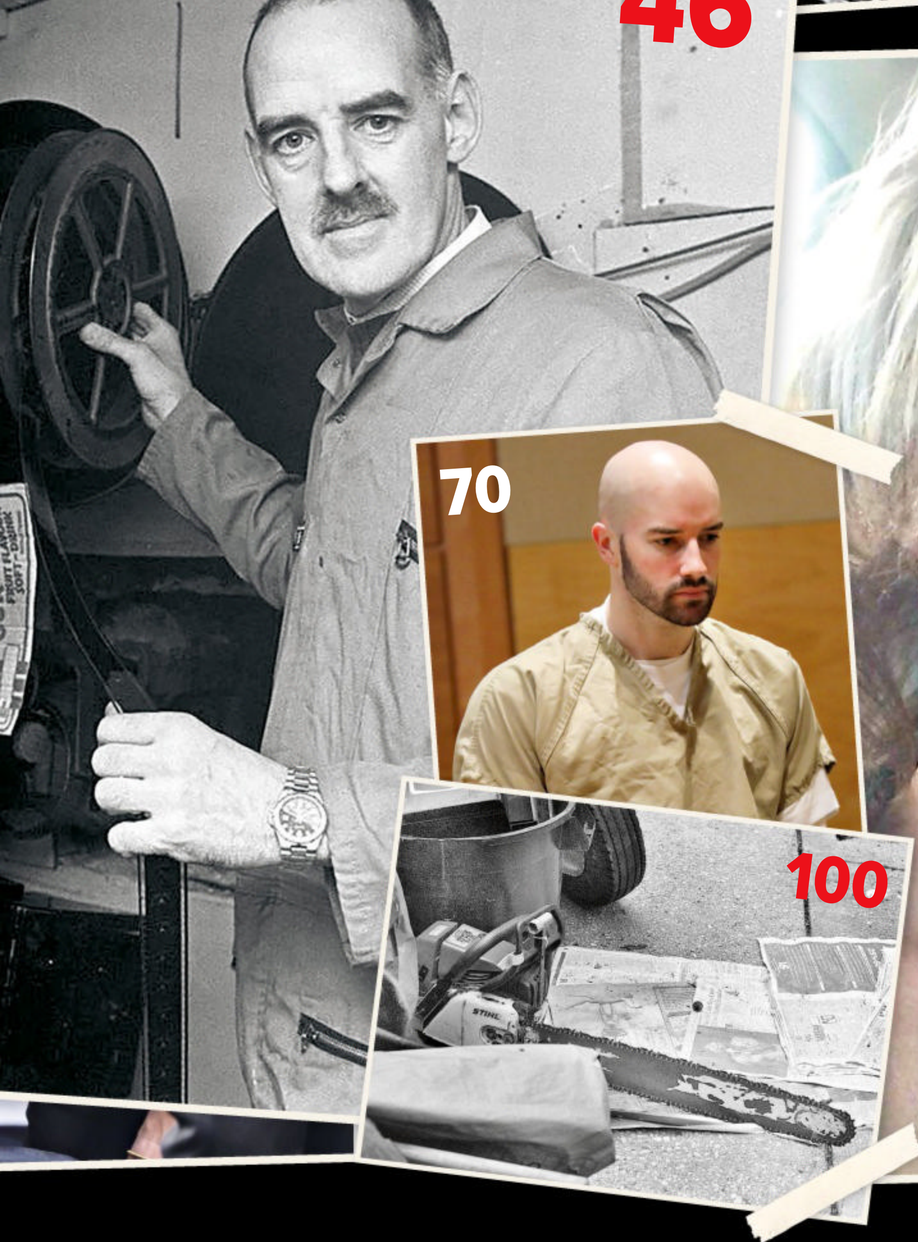

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Playing the victim

How did a promising actor go from the bright lights of Tinseltown to a prison cell?

Ever since he was a little boy, Shelley Malil dreamt of a Hollywood career.

Big ambitions for a young lad growing up in a small fishing village in India.

As a youngster, he'd watched Bob Hope on a neighbour's TV, and set his sights on comedy, too.

Aged 10, he moved to America with his family, and went on to perform in school plays.

And, after two years at a New York acting academy, he moved to the bright lights of Los Angeles.

Like thousands of other young hopefuls in the 80s, he wanted to be a star.

He bagged small parts in films, TV and adverts, and became a household face after appearing in one of Budweiser's 'Whassup?' spin-off adverts.

Parts in TV shows *Scrubs*, *ER* and *Seinfield* followed.

In 2005, he got his big break – a supporting role, playing a co-worker of Steve Carell's character in classic comedy film *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*.

He was praised for his part, looked to have a bright future ahead.

In 2007, aged 43, he met Kendra Beebe, then 35, online. The pair hit it off and enjoyed a holiday in Mexico together.

But it soon became clear that the relationship was stormy. The couple rowed, split up and made up again constantly.

He leant towards her...and plunged in a 3in knife

After about a year together, Kendra ended the relationship for good.

She told friends Shelley had become jealous and controlling.

However, one day in August 2008, she agreed to go to the beach with him. But he drove off, leaving her stranded, with no way of getting home.

Then Shelley went to Kendra's home, stole personal items, including marijuana, and locked her out.

Two days later, on 10 August, things took an even more sinister turn. Kendra was sitting on her back patio, drinking wine with a male friend, when Shelley stormed into her garden.

'Kendra, Kendra!' he cried as he ran towards her, his face filled with rage.

He leant towards her as if to give her a hug or kiss – but, instead, plunged a 3in kitchen knife into her chest.

Quickly and aggressively, he stabbed Kendra three times, before her friend wrestled Shelley off, prising the knife from his hand.

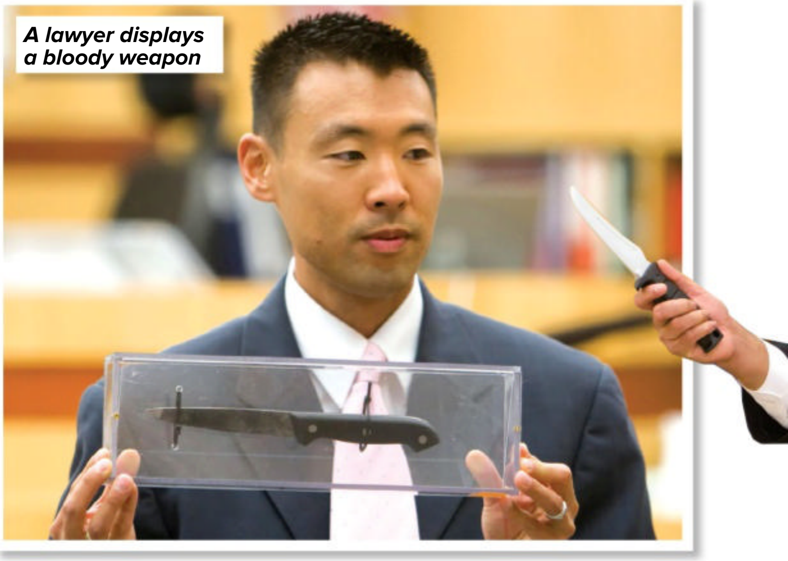
Kendra got up and fled into the house, but Shelley was in hot pursuit. He grabbed a butcher's knife from the kitchen, and stabbed her again.

He picked up a broken wine glass, slashed Kendra's skin. Then stabbed her in the neck, back and arms as she lay defenceless.

Next, he grabbed a pillow and tried to smother Kendra, but she scrambled away.

Kendra made it to the front of the house, falling through the door and collapsing on her porch in a pool of blood.

'Call 911!' she screamed as her neighbours approached.



A lawyer displays a bloody weapon

'Emotional time bomb' Malil

A distraught Kendra describes her ordeal

Scarred for life

By now, Shelley had stabbed her 23 times.

He ran off as her neighbours tried to stop the bleeding. Kendra was in a critical condition and was rushed to hospital.

Incredibly, despite puncture wounds to one lung, her neck, chest, back and arms, she survived.

But the flesh on her chin was nearly sliced off and she'd been left with scars.

Shelley Malil was arrested at a railway station the next day.

During his court case in September 2010, Malil pleaded not guilty to attempted murder. He said that he'd initially gone to Kendra's home to say sorry for stealing things from her, and to warn her he'd emailed her colleagues explicit photos of them together.

He claimed that he acted in self defence when Kendra attacked him with a garden hoe.

The prosecution argued he'd flown into a drunken jealous rage after seeing her with another man.

Malil was convicted of attempted premeditated murder and assault with a deadly weapon.

In court, Malil demonstrates events with a rubber knife

Before he was sentenced to 12 years to life, he apologised.

'I want to do whatever I need to do to make sure I make right from the wrong that I did,' he said.

'Kendra Beebe did not deserve anything that happened to her. I can't even begin to imagine what she has been through.'

But Kendra, who'd been left scarred for life by the horrendous attack, wasn't convinced by his show of remorse.

Kendra wasn't convinced by his show of remorse

'During the trial, it became clear he was an actor but not a very good actor at that. His testimony was lie after lie after lie,' she said.

But Shelley Malil's promising acting career was over, and deservedly so.

Then, in a surprise turn of events, Malil was released on parole in September 2018, after serving just eight years.

During his release hearing, he told the court there was no excuse for his crime but described himself as an emotional time bomb.

'I am fully invested in my rehabilitation, and I never want to create another victim again,' Malil said, dabbing his eyes with a tissue.

Assessments found he posed low risk of committing violence in the future.

But while the parole board may have been impressed with Malil's performance, it seems that Kendra wasn't.

'He's an actor by trade, but a liar by choice,' she told reporters afterwards.

Not long after Malil's release, Kendra spoke on national television and said she was living in fear.

'I will always have to watch my back for the rest of my life,' she said.

But true to the incredible spirit that saw her fight for her life, Kendra Beebe insisted that she wasn't a victim, but a survivor.

WORDS: FRANCES LEATE. PHOTOS: ALAMY, GETTY

Dumped in the woods

Surely no mother could be so callous?

Little Jordan, a happy 2-year-old

In the early hours of Sunday 2 September 2018, Charisse Stinson, then 21, stumbled into a hotel.

She collapsed at the reception desk. A scrape on the side of her head.

Frantic, she claimed her toddler son, Jordan Belliveau, 2, had been kidnapped and she needed to call police.

And when officers arrived, she proceeded to tell them a terrifying story.

Charisse, who was six months pregnant, said that she had been walking to a friend's place at 9.30pm, carrying Jordan.

A man in a white Toyota Camry, called Antwan, had offered to give them a lift.

She'd still had some way to walk.

Her toddler was heavy, so she'd accepted.

But, then, Antwan had beaten her unconscious.

And when she'd come round hours later at 1.30am, in a nearby park, she was alone.

Little Jordan was nowhere to be seen.

So she'd raced to the hotel close by to call emergency services.

Alarmed, police immediately sent out an amber alert, lighting up people's phones, social media and news outlets.

Spreading the word that a little boy was missing.

Presumed taken.

An extensive search for Jordan Belliveau began, involving sniffer dogs and divers in local lakes and ponds.

Charisse described Antwan as having dreadlocks, gold teeth.

A sketch of the suspect was released, alongside Jordan's photo.

Police urged the community of Largo, in Florida, USA, to come forward with any possible information that they might have.

When police arrived, she told them a terrifying story

Apart from Charisse, Jordan had last been seen two days earlier.

Police found footage of Charisse at the park in the early hours, just as she'd claimed.

But earlier CCTV showed her walking around the area, even climbing around a children's playground, on her own.

Jordan's green rucksack was found in a rubbish bin nearby.

And as they searched Charisse's home, officers found blood on several items.

Little Jordan had apparently fallen and cut his chin in the days prior to his disappearance, and detectives thought this could explain the blood.

But something wasn't adding up – and one man in particular didn't believe a word of Charisse's story.

The little boy's father, Jordan Belliveau Sr.

He and Charisse had separated only a few months earlier, and he was also the father of her unborn baby.

Two days into the search, he spoke to reporters.

Charisse knew where their son was, Jordan Sr claimed.

Just tell me where he is, he'd messaged Charisse.

Charisse denied it.

If I knew where my baby was, we would not be going through this, she'd replied.

Baby Jordan had been dealt a tough start in life.

Jordan Sr and Charisse's relationship had been turbulent, with reports of domestic violence on both sides.

At only several months old, Jordan had been taken into care.

Placed with a loving foster family until his parents could provide a 'stable and safe home', free of violence.

He'd become a 'very happy child' according to his foster parents.

Then, three months

County Jail
STINSON

The young mum said her toddler had been taken

Justice for Jordan
Jordan Bel

Tears from onlookers in court

before his disappearance, he'd been returned to his parents, under monitoring by child-welfare services.

Only, his parents had then split up, and now Jordan was missing.

Just over two days after Charisse stumbled into that hotel, the search ended in the worst possible way.

Jordan's body was found in local woodland.

And under intense questioning, Charisse's story started to change.

Eventually, she cracked.

Admitted the abduction was all lies.

That Jordan had fallen out of bed, hurt his leg and was howling in pain.

Frustrated by his crying, she'd lashed out.

Hit him across his face with the back of her hand, causing Jordan to hit his head against a wall.

Over the next hours, he'd started having seizures, getting progressively worse.

But instead of calling an ambulance, she'd dumped him in the woods near a local leisure centre.

Left her 2-year-old son, not knowing if he was alive or dead.

Then she'd concocted Antwan and the elaborate story that she'd fed police.

Charisse was charged with Jordan's murder.

A post-mortem confirmed the cause of death was blunt force trauma.

Jordan had suffered a skull fracture, broken leg, bleeding under his scalp.

But the coroner's report didn't reveal when, exactly, Jordan had died, or how long he'd been dead before he was found.

Police were confident his injuries matched his mother's confession.

That December, Charisse gave birth to a baby girl in prison, who was placed in foster care

But Jordan's death caused ripples within the child-welfare system.

It emerged Charisse, who was jobless, struggling for money and about to be evicted, had been missing counselling sessions. Failing to stay in touch with care workers and refusing to answer the door.

In fact, a case worker had visited Jordan the day before he'd died.

Charisse had refused to let them in at first.

When she relented, the flat appeared bare but safe.

The case worker spoke to Charisse for an hour, warning her that if she didn't comply, Jordan would again be removed from her care.

The search ended in the worst possible way

No one was found to be at fault, it was said Jordan's murder couldn't have been foreseen.

But in July 2020, Jordan's Law was passed.

It's aim was to increase communication between police and care workers. To train staff to catch red flags in a child's life before the case turned traumatic or fatal.

That October, as part of a plea deal, Charisse Stinson, 23, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and making a false report to a police officer.

She was handed a 50-year jail term.

'It is a long time but I will walk with my head held high. I apologise for the pain I have caused,' she said.

Little Jordan Belliveau wasn't given the fair, loving, secure start he deserved.

His life tragically cut short.

But with Jordan's Law, he leaves an important legacy.

Stinson: 'I apologise'

WORDS: MISHAAL KHAN. PHOTOS: ALAMY

Mercy a killer

Cyntoia Brown shot a man dead, but many were outraged by her life sentence...

Cyntoia at her clemency hearing

When a young woman was jailed for life for killing Sunday-school teacher and community champion Johnny Allen, it seemed like justice had been served.

Another brutal killer behind bars.

Case closed.

But there was more to this murder than first met the eye.

Cyntoia Brown was just 16 years old when she pulled the trigger and killed Johnny, 43, in August 2004.

Johnny, a former estate agent, was well-known for his community work as a Sunday-school teacher and youth minister.

He was divorced when he met Cyntoia at a fast-food restaurant in East Nashville, USA.

And he was there for a clear reason – to have sex with her.

Cyntoia was under the control of her boyfriend and pimp, 24-year-old Garion McGlothen, known by the nickname Kut Throat.

Cyntoia had suffered a troubled childhood.

She was born with foetal alcohol syndrome after her mother drank throughout the pregnancy.

Then, hooked on crack cocaine, her mother put her up for adoption.

A lost soul, Cyntoia fell through the cracks of the care system, dabbling in petty crime, becoming a homeless teenage runaway.

And Kut Throat saw a situation that he could take advantage of.

He fed the vulnerable girl drugs, sent her out to have sex with men for money.

The couple lived in motels, and he'd rape and beat her if she didn't come back with the cash he'd requested.

On the night in question, Cyntoia was in no position to turn down Johnny's offer of $150 (around £100) for sex.

After meeting at the restaurant, Johnny took Cyntoia back to his home.

What happened in the following hours became the focus of a murder trial months later.

But what remained indisputable was that Cyntoia Brown did fatally shoot Johnny Allen.

Cyntoia was soon arrested and charged with aggravated robbery and first-degree murder.

She told police that when they got back to his home, Johnny had discussed his military background and shooting prowess, and shown her his gun collection.

Cyntoia said she feared for her life when she shot him with the .40-caliber handgun she carried in her bag for protection.

But police believed she'd killed him in cold blood so she could rob him, as she'd fled the scene with Johnny's guns, money and van.

After all, officers had found Johnny naked in his bed with a gunshot wound to the back of his head.

His hands were linked behind his head, as if he'd been sleeping at the time.

It didn't appear as though he was in a position to attack Cyntoia.

In court, Cyntoia claimed she thought Johnny had been reaching for his own gun when she shot him in self-defence.

But the jury didn't believe her.

for

Anna Whaley speaks up for her friend Johnny Allen

Now Cyntoia shares her story to help others

In August 2006, Cyntoia Brown was convicted of the murder and robbery charges and later sentenced to life in prison.

Still a teenager, she wouldn't be up for parole until she was 69.

But while the courts had spoken and Cyntoia settled into her long stretch behind bars, the case gained international interest.

A decade into Cyntoia's jail sentence, celebrities like Rihanna and Kim Kardashian started to campaign for her release.

In 2017, Rihanna took to Instagram to express her thoughts on the case.

Did we somehow change the definition of #justice along the way?

Elsewhere, Kim Kardashian was also speaking openly about the injustice she felt was happening.

The system has failed, she tweeted.

With the #MeToo movement now in full swing, petitions were launched, and prominent lawyers also said that they wanted to help Cyntoia.

Her supporters said Cyntoia had been a victim of child sex trafficking, and that she was genuinely fearful for her life.

They said with her young age, and suffering from the effects of foetal alcohol syndrome, it was impossible for her to consider the full consequences of her actions when she killed Johnny Allen.

Rihanna and Kim Kardashian started to campaign

Over the years, the campaign gained pace.

And in 2018, over a decade since Cyntoia Brown had first set foot in prison, her clemency hearing began.

It emerged Cyntoia hadn't wasted her time in jail.

In fact, she'd completed two degrees and even married a hip-hop artist, Jamie Long, over the phone.

It was while studying in prison that Cyntoia first heard the phrase 'sex trafficking', which made her see her own experiences in a new light.

Kut Throat, the man who had forced Cyntoia into selling her body, had been shot and killed in 2005.

And her defence team at the clemency hearing argued that, during her initial trial, Cyntoia Brown shouldn't have been treated so harshly.

They said that her traumatic background of sex trafficking, living with foetal alcohol syndrome and her young age of 16 were not properly taken into consideration.

They also said that she endured an adult's trial when she should've been treated as a child.

On 7 January 2019, the Governor of Tennessee, Bill Haslam, granted Cyntoia Brown clemency.

And on 8 August that year, aged 31, she was released from prison.

A moment of joy for many.

But not everyone agreed it was the right decision.

Many of Johnny Allen's friends and family were outraged that his killer had been released before the end of her sentence.

A friend of Johnny's, Anna Whaley, said during the clemency hearing, 'Johnny has a voice, and Johnny's family has a voice. Johnny's voice has not been heard in all these years. I want to say Johnny's life mattered.

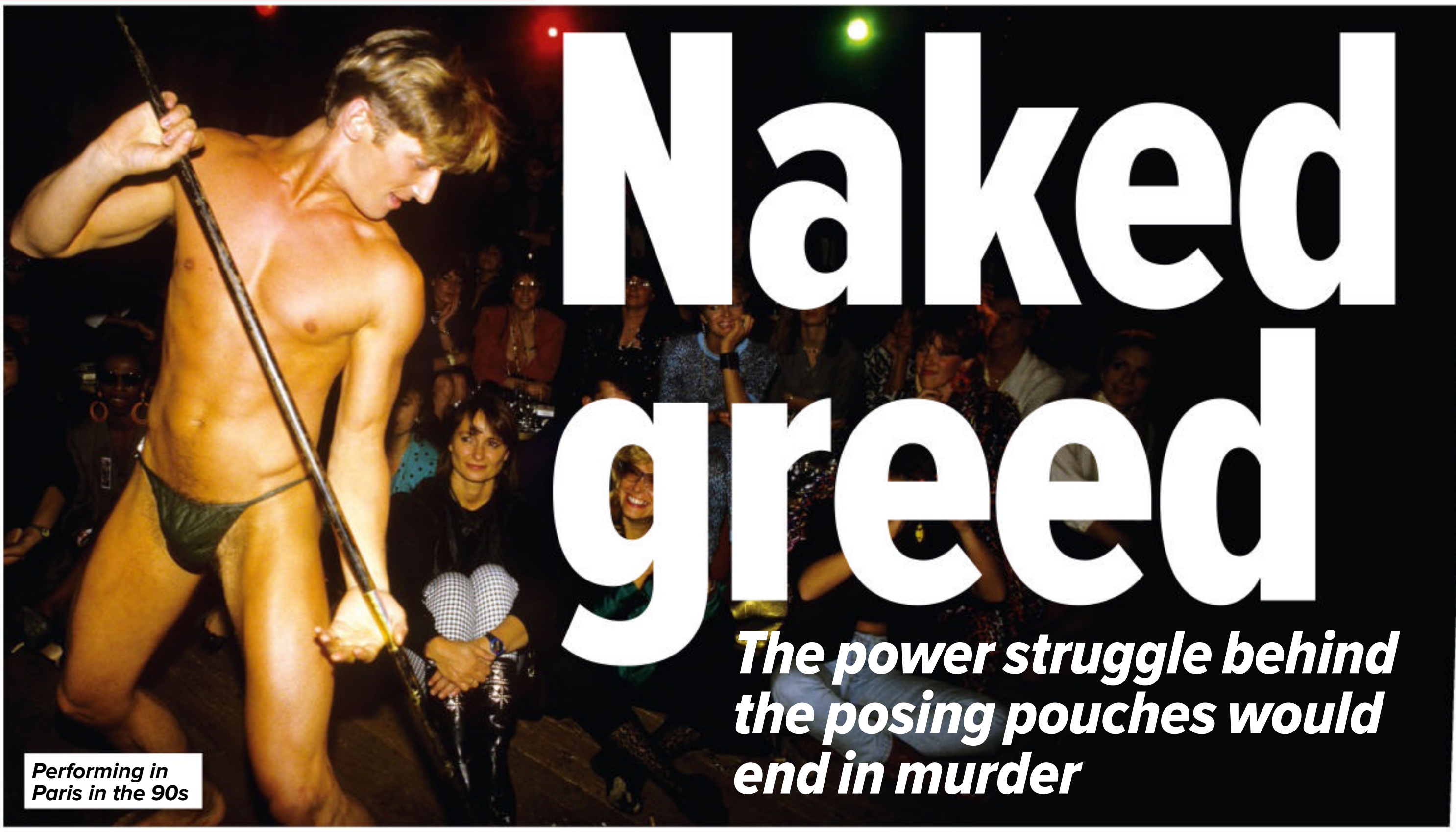
'Cyntoia went out that night with a loaded gun in her purse and that was the gun she used to kill Johnny.'

Now, Cyntoia has released memoirs about her experience and was the face of a Netflix documentary.

She also runs community-service programmes and mentors at-risk girls in the hope that they won't take the same dangerous path that she did.

WORDS: BESS BROWNING. PHOTOS: ALAMY, GETTY, PA PHOTOS

STRIP-CLUB SHOCKER



Performing in Paris in the 90s

Naked greed

The power struggle behind the posing pouches would end in murder

Before *Magic Mike* and *The Full Monty* came Chippendales, a troupe of muscly, tanned male dancers, oiled up and wearing little more than dickie bows and cuffs.

Women would flock to see them, sipping cocktails and erupting with screams of 'take it off' as the lads stripped to their scanty posing pouches.

But, while the dancers were making dreams come true, behind the scenes things were less than squeaky clean.

Chippendales founder, Somen 'Steve' Banerjee, had originally emigrated from India to California in 1969, keen to live his 'American dream'.

Banerjee had big plans to open a nightclub, make a fortune.

He started saving, working as a caretaker and running two petrol stations.

By 1975, he had enough cash to rent a run-down bar in West LA.

He put on everything to draw a crowd – magic shows, dinner, theatre, even mud-wrestling.

Nothing worked.

That was, until he started hosting a male exotic dance night – for ladies only.

Rebranding his club as Chippendales changed the game completely.

Queues stretched around the block.

Chippendales attracted a classy clientele, all of whom were prepared to pay good money to watch, flirt, or even kiss a tanned, glistening, near-naked hunk.

Soon, the club was raking in big money.

In 1981, Banerjee hired New Yorker Nick De Noia as choreographer, believing that De Noia could help take Chippendales to the next level.

It worked. Chippendales started touring.

They were kitted out in new costumes – as builders and Superman, in Spandex and trench coats.

New clubs opened in New York, Denver and Dallas.

The successful act was now pulling in $8 million (nearly £6 million) a year.

But inevitably, following their success, copycat acts soon popped up.

To rid himself of competition, furious Banerjee paid thugs to burn down rival strip clubs.

Police knew there was an arsonist at large – but no signs pointed to Banerjee.

When arson didn't work, his lawyers sent out 'cease and desist' orders, claiming breach of copyright. His relationship with Nick De Noia became strained, too, as the duo rowed over who was responsible for the act's phenomenal success.

Women paid to watch the glistening hunks

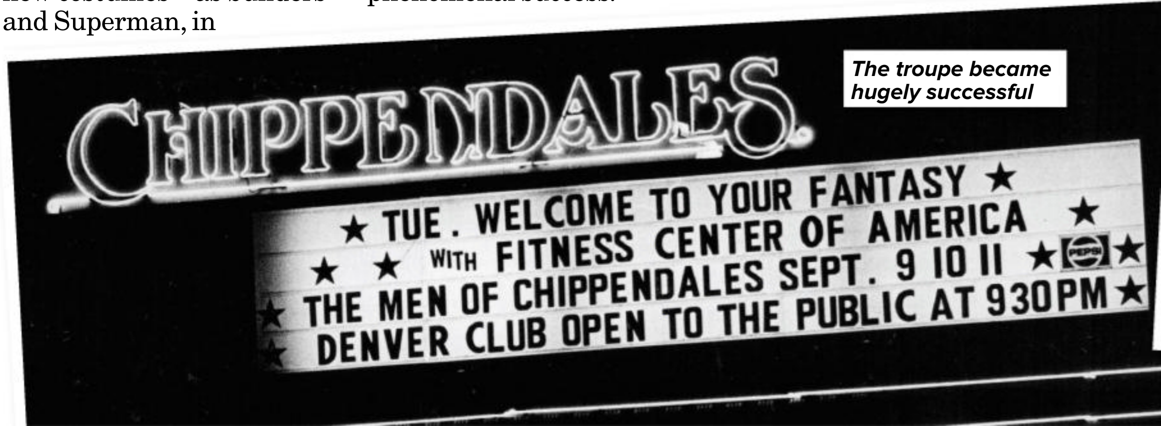
There were arguments over money, control.

Meeting in a restaurant to try to sort out their differences, De Noia jotted a contract on a napkin.

He'd give up his rights to the New York show in exchange for 50% of any future touring profits.

He also wrote that he had the right to take Chippendales on tour and 'own it in perpetuity'.

Not knowing that 'perpetuity' meant forever, Banerjee simply signed it and, in doing so, inadvertently handed De Noia total independent control and half the profits of the most successful part of the business.


CHIPPENDALES
★ TUE . WELCOME TO YOUR FANTASY ★
★ ★ WITH FITNESS CENTER OF AMERICA ★
THE MEN OF CHIPPENDALES SEPT. 9 10 11 ★ ★
DENVER CLUB OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AT 930PM ★

The troupe became hugely successful

Nick De Noia and his wife Jennifer O'Neill

With De Noia at the helm, Chippendales began touring internationally. The troupe's profits were $80,000 (around £60,000) a week.

De Noia was invited on chat shows, and not once did he mention his so-called partner. People assumed De Noia was the group's founder and, while he enjoyed all the attention, Banerjee lingered bitterly in the shadows.

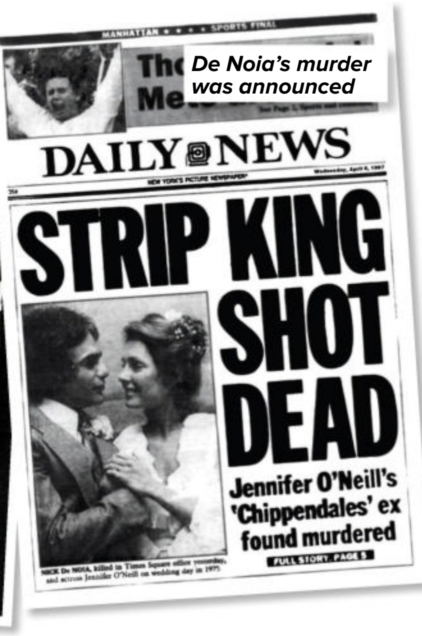
He tried launching his own Chippendales tour, only for De Noia to hit him with a lawsuit – and win.

By 1985, the pair barely spoke, and their backstage clashes were infamous as rows erupted in the office, their voices only drowned out by excitable shrieks from the audience.

By 1987, Banerjee was drowning in unpaid taxes. Had also had to foot a bill for $70,000 (around £50,000) for the reprint of a failed Chippendales calendar that had 31 days in every month.

Meanwhile, that April, De Noia was making plans for a new male striptease act to premiere in London.

Make a date with 12 gorgeous men for the holidays!
The 1983 Chippendales Invitational Calendar now available at finer gift, book and drug stores everywhere or send $5.95 plus $1.50 postage and handling to Chippendales, 3739 Overland Ave. Los Angeles, CA 90034 (Allow 2 weeks for delivery)
Chippendales



De Noia's murder was announced

MANHATTAN ★ ★ ★ ★ SPORTS FINAL

DAILY NEWS

NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER

STRIP KING SHOT DEAD

Jennifer O'Neill's 'Chippendales' ex found murdered

FULL STORY, PAGE 5

NICK De NOIA, killed in Times Square office yesterday, and actress Jennifer O'Neill on wedding day in 1975

He went to New York to sign the contracts. Only, as he sat in his Manhattan office, a man posing as a delivery driver walked in, carrying an envelope which disguised his gun.

With one shot to the face, De Noia was dead.

The gunman vanished and, hours later, De Noia's co-worker found him slumped over his desk.

Police combed the scene, but they found no evidence, no motive.

Detectives tried but couldn't tie the murder to Banerjee.

The case went cold.

With De Noia gone, Banerjee bought back his share of Chippendales, and was once again in full control.

For three years, he focused on shutting down copycat troupes.

Then, in 1990, a UK-based act called *Adonis: Men of Hollywood* caught his attention. It included several ex-Chippendales.

However, because they focused on the UK, a lawsuit simply couldn't touch them.

Then, in July 1991, an informant contacted the FBI and claimed he'd been hired as a hitman, ordered to fly to the UK and use cyanide to kill two key members of Adonis as they performed at the Winter Gardens in Blackpool.

After a sting operation, detectives arrested Ray Colon, a long-time associate of Banerjee.

Not only was Colon behind the earlier arson attacks, he'd also arranged De Noia's murder – on Banerjee's orders.

Colon struck a deal, agreed to work with investigators to entrap his boss.

On 2 September 1993, Somen 'Steve' Banerjee was arrested. After making a plea bargain, all charges relating to the Adonis troupe were dropped.

But Banerjee pleaded guilty to the second-degree murder of his business partner Nick De Noia, as well as attempted arson and racketeering. He was facing 26 years in prison.

His fortune and his American dream were in tatters. Ownership of Chippendales had defaulted to his wife, who'd divorced him and sold it for millions.

And so, in October 1994, just hours before his sentencing, Banerjee took his own life in his cell.

Six years on, with new owners, Chippendales relaunched in Las Vegas.

Performing seven nights a week to sell-out crowds, the troupe continues to earn a fortune as well as worldwide adoration.

Somen 'Steve' Banerjee can never be forgiven for his evil actions, but his dream lives on.

WORDS: EMMA ROSSITER. PHOTOS: ALAMY, GETTY, SHUTTERSTOCK

LIVING WITH THE EVIDENCE

Inside the deep freeze

She seemed to be a struggling yet caring mother – but looks can be deceiving...

When 35-year-old Mitchelle Blair fell behind on her rent, it came as no surprise. Living in one of the most impoverished cities in the US, the single mum-of-four was unemployed, had little education.

She'd had two daughters with Alexander J Dorsey, 35, who she'd lived with for several years. But, when they separated, Dorsey showed little interest in any contact with the family, and a court would later hear he owed around $39,000 (nearly £30,000) in child support.

Mitchelle went on to have two sons with another ex-partner Steven Berry, 31, but he was in and out of prison and, according to a court hearing, he also owed around $12,000 (about £9,000) in child support.

Despite this, Mitchelle's children were homeschooled and she was proud of their achievements, even sticking their artwork up on the living-room wall.

Pictures of a lion, a kitten and a lorry brought colour to the otherwise dingy, cramped flat.

Neighbours saw Mitchelle as a good mother. She took pride in the role, posting on her Facebook page, *Loyal to my babies,* and a picture with the message, *There is no greater blessing than being called Mom*.

And although she rarely allowed guests inside her home, friends considered her a beautiful person with a good heart.

But a court order showed that she owed thousands in rent. She'd exhausted loans from friends and relatives, and with no way left to pay, was served with an eviction notice.

On 24 March 2015, bailiffs came knocking at Mitchelle's door.

On arrival, they found the property empty and, assuming she'd fled, entered the apartment to begin the process of removal.

A large chest freezer was pushed up against the living room wall. It was too heavy to move, so the baliffs looked inside, unaware they were about to make a horrifying discovery.

For, inside, the frozen body of a teenage girl lay wrapped in a plastic bag.

The police were called immediately and, on further inspection, the body of a young boy was found buried beneath her.

Blair was quickly located in a nearby flat, where she was babysitting for a neighbour. Two of her own children, aged 7 and 17, were with her.

Upon questioning, it quickly became apparent the two bodies in the freezer were her other two children.

'I'm sorry,' she confessed to the police.

The Detroit mother was arrested on suspicion of murder. It took three days for the bodies to thaw so postmortems could be carried out.

They were identified as Blair's 9-year-old son Stephen Berry, and 13-year-old daughter Stoni Blair.

Both had multiple blunt-force trauma injuries.

'Loyal to my babies': Mitchelle Blair

No remorse: Blair in court

Stephen, 9 years old

Stoni, aged 13

The medical examiner ruled their deaths homicides and determined they had been in the freezer at least a couple of years.

In court in June 2015, Mitchelle Blair, then aged 36, pleaded guilty to two murders.

And, shockingly, Blair told the judge that she was not sorry.

'I don't regret none of this,' she said, adding, 'I don't feel no remorse for the death of those demons.'

She claimed to have discovered that Stephen had been sexually abusing her youngest son, though she had never witnessed an assault and hadn't reported this to the police.

She said she hadn't intended to kill him, but had wanted to inflict punishment on him by torturing him.

For two weeks, she'd kicked and punched him repeatedly, placed a bag over his head until he lost consciousness, poured scalding water on him and forced him to drink window cleaner.

She also admitted wrapping a belt around her son's neck and lifting him up, which culminated in him being choked to death on 30 August 2012.

After killing her son, Blair then callously wrapped his body in a blanket and stuffed him in the freezer.

With the child's father absent from their lives, Blair was able to conceal Stephen's disappearance for the next nine months by pretending that he was staying with relatives – until the evil mum struck for a second time.

On 25 May 2013, Blair claimed to have discovered that her youngest son was still being abused, but this time by her daughter Stoni.

Blair claimed that, to punish Stoni, she beat her with a stick, strangled her with a T-shirt and suffocated her to death with a plastic bag.

Admitting to her two surviving children what she'd done, she sought her eldest daughter's help to put Stoni's body in the freezer, next to her dead half-brother.

She claimed to have wanted to turn herself in to the police at that point, but she was afraid of leaving her kids without a mother.

She pretended to the world that nothing was amiss

Instead, she forced them to live with the corpses of their siblings while pretending to the outside world nothing was amiss.

Blair claimed to be homeschooling the kids, and with no system in place to alert childcare professionals to check on students who are removed from the school system, Blair was able to get away with her sick crime for over two years.

In July 2015, at the Lincoln Hall of Justice in Detroit, Mitchelle Blair was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

She told the court she would have accepted the death penalty if Michigan had it, but Judge Dana Hathaway told her, 'You imposed the death penalty on your own children.

'As a mother, one of your primary responsibilities was to protect your kids, and in that respect, you failed in the worst possible way,' the judge continued.

'Thankfully, that house of horrors that you created is no longer in existence.'

The prosecution said that there was no evidence of sexual assault on her youngest child, but Blair continued to express no remorse and told the court, 'As horrendous as everybody thinks I am – that's fine.'

WORDS: FRANCESCA WOOD. PHOTOS: ALAMY, SHUTTERSTOCK

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Body in the boot

A smirking killer sent a condolence message, a donation, and even went to her funeral...

When 28-year-old Heather Bogle took a job at a Whirlpool washing-machine factory in Sandusky, Ohio, USA, she hoped it'd be temporary.

Having just finished nursing school, the young mum dreamt of a new career in healthcare.

To build a better life for her 5-year-old daughter.

Heather did night shifts.

But although she worked hard and was well-liked amongst colleagues, behind closed doors, she was having a tough time.

Despite her best efforts, Heather had failed one of her nursing exams.

She was devastated.

And her one-year relationship with girlfriend Carmella Badillo had ended, as the couple rarely saw each other.

On 9 April 2015, Heather clocked off at 6.17am.

Then, she simply vanished.

When she failed to collect her little girl from school, Heather's mother panicked and raised the alarm.

The following evening, Heather's car was traced to a block of flats in nearby Clyde, a mile from the Whirlpool factory.

Inside, police made a grisly discovery...

Heather had been brutally murdered and stuffed in the boot of her own car.

She'd been savagely beaten, her hair hacked, and her fingernails cut down to the cuticles.

Her wrists and ankles were bound, and defensive wounds on her hands suggested she'd fought back before ultimately being shot twice in the back.

Locals were shocked and frightened, her family utterly devastated.

Tributes poured in, and friends set up a fundraiser for Heather's daughter in the mum's name.

I am distraught that there will be no more of your smile at work. You will always be in my thoughts, wrote co-worker Daniel Myers, with a donation of $125 (around £90).

Detective Sean O'Connell ran the investigation. Swore to get to the bottom of what happened to Heather, and immediately looked into her relationship with ex-girlfriend Carmella.

But although text messages and phone calls had turned acrimonious between the two, O'Connell was satisfied she had nothing to do with Heather's murder.

Tributes poured in, a fundraiser set up in her name

Days later, O'Connell received an email tip from a Whirlpool employee, urging him to investigate Heather's colleague Daniel Myers.

But O'Connell had other ideas.

He'd become suspicious of one of the tenants living in the flats where Heather had been found.

Single mum Keyona Bor had a good job at a nursing home and was only interested in providing for her kids, but O'Connell took a dislike to her.

Keyona's friend, Omar Satchel, who'd been at her flat on the night of the murder, had served time for firearms and violence.

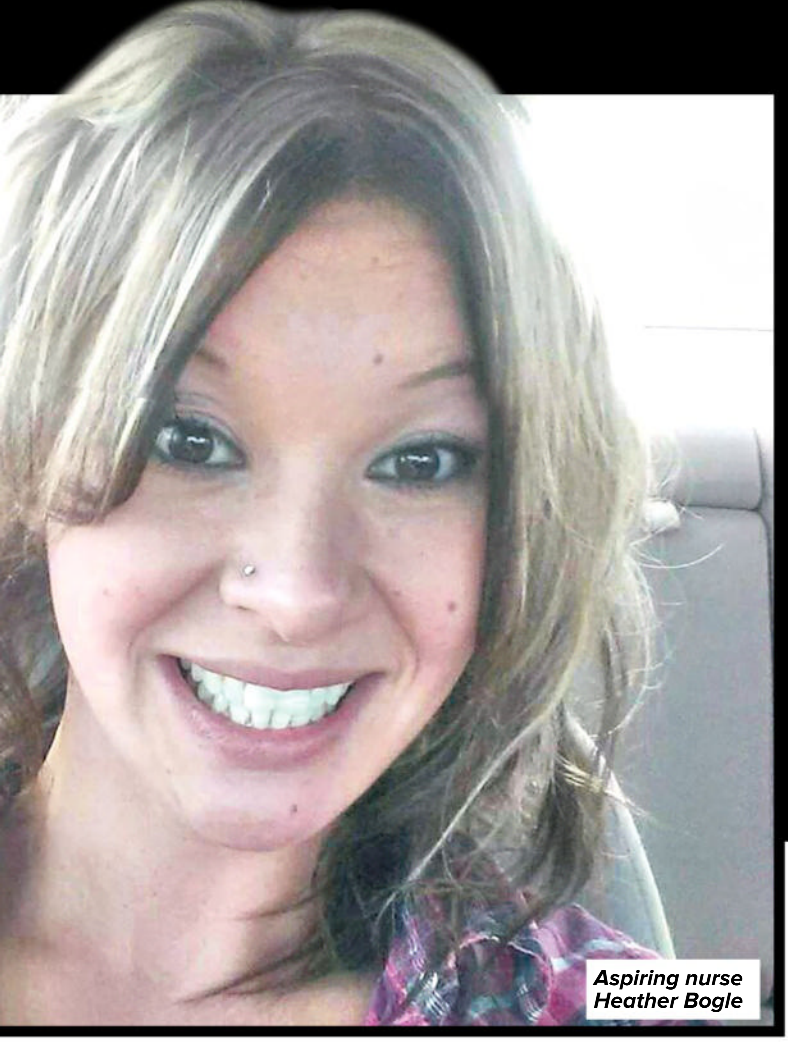
It was enough to convince O'Connell that the two had killed Heather.

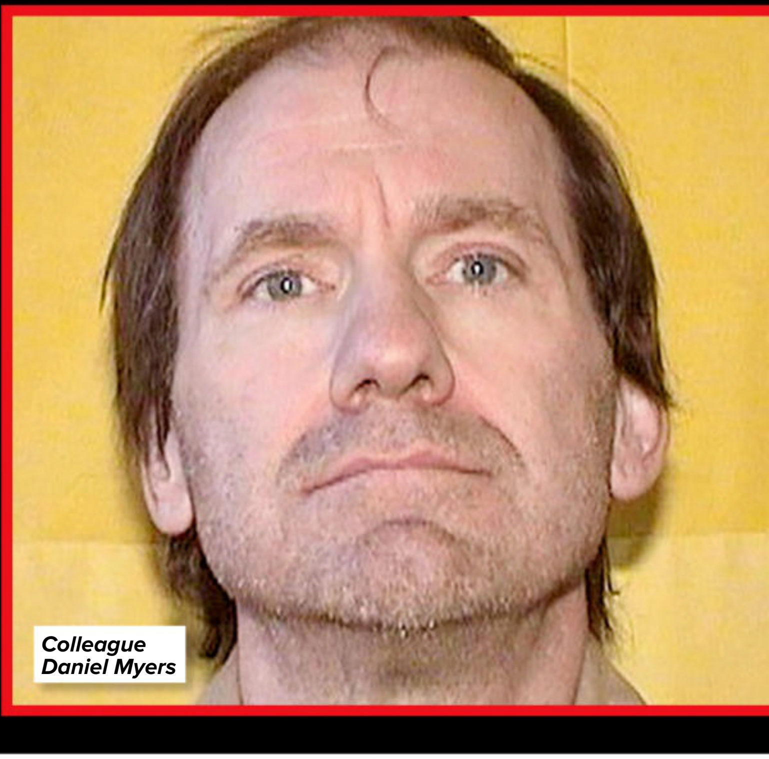
Without revealing his source, O'Connell then maintained a third accomplice, Kayree Jeffrey, had disposed of the murder weapon.

O'Connell publicly named the three suspects, but didn't have enough evidence to arrest them.

Traces of DNA were

Sandusky, Ohio


Aspiring nurse Heather Bogle


Colleague Daniel Myers

recovered from underneath Heather's cuticles – which didn't match any of O'Connell's suspects.

But though they always maintained their innocence, he refused to rule them out.

For more than a year, he hounded them and even submitted a report to prosecutors omitting the vital DNA information which pointed to their innocence.

This was flagged by officials, and in June 2016, O'Connell was taken off the case.

Heather's family feared her killer might never be caught.

In 2017, detective Chris Hilton took the case and vowed to solve the murder.

By gaining access to Heather's Gmail account, Hilton discovered her exact movements had been stored by Google from the moment she'd left work at 6.17am.

GPS coordinates placed her just a few miles from the factory, 13 minutes after she was last seen.

It was revealed to be the home of Daniel Myers.

On 26 May 2017, police descended on Myers' home.

'Did you know her?' they asked.

'Very, very little,' he said.

Odd, considering the heartfelt condolence message and donation he had given.

Five days on, Myers' DNA was found to match that under Heather's cuticles.

He was arrested and charged with her murder.

Afterwards, a criminal investigation was launched against ex-detective Sean O'Connell.

It showed he'd falsified police reports and ignored an email suggesting Daniel Myers could be the killer, just days into the investigation.

In September 2018, O'Connell pleaded guilty to tampering with evidence and was sentenced to 24 months imprisonment.

In a statement, Keyona Bor said he destroyed her life, and she had lost her job, her flat and reputation. She, Omar Satchel and Kayree Jeffrey were all cleared of the murder.

In February 2019, Daniel Myers, then 49, pleaded guilty to the kidnap and murder of Heather Bogle, with sexual intent. He was sentenced to life without parole.

Myers admitted luring Heather to his home to console her after she had failed her nursing exam and received some upsetting texts.

He tried to cover his tracks by removing evidence

Prosecutor Tim Braun told the court that Myers had attempted to seduce Heather, but had become aggressive when she had rejected him.

'He physically overpowered her, beat her into submission, handcuffed her…and tortured her for a long time.'

She was then fatally shot, before Myers tried to cover his tracks by removing DNA evidence from her body and his home.

For two long years, Myers hid in plain sight – even attending his victim's funeral.

Calling him 'The Devil', Heather's ex-girlfriend Carmella said, 'I do not forgive you. You took away a mother and a friend, and a loved one that no one could ever get back.'

HAD HE KILLED BEFORE?

After Daniel Myers' arrest, 10 women came forward claiming he'd raped them. And Loriann Haley is convinced Myers shot her sister, Leigh Ann Sluder, in 2009. Leigh Ann, Myers' ex girlfriend, was found dead with a gunshot wound to her chest, a long-barrelled rifle lying next to her in bed. Authorities ruled her death a suicide, which has been upheld. Yet Loriann says, 'I knew Danny had killed her.' Observing how rationally and meticulously Myers attempted to destroy DNA evidence in Heather's murder, Prosecutor Tim Braun said, 'That usually takes experience.'

WORDS: FRANCESCA WOODSTOCK. PHOTOS: SANDUSKY COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, ALAMY

NOT MODEL BEHAVIOUR

Catwalks and lies

An A-list boyfriend and Victoria's Secret contract simply weren't enough...

She led a charmed existence...

The sort of life most young girls dream about.

Stunning looks, supermodel career, jet-set lifestyle and an A-lister boyfriend.

Bar Refaeli had it all.

Or so it seemed.

But beneath the glitz and glamour of her million-dollar lifestyle lurked dodgy dealings and shocking secrets.

Born in 1985, Bar was raised on a horse ranch in Israeli countryside.

She started modelling at a young age – and by 15, she was appearing on magazine covers.

The first Israeli model to be featured in *Sports Illustrated* magazine, 5ft 8in beauty Bar won contracts with top designer Ralph Lauren and lingerie label Victoria's Secret.

Graced catwalks at fashion shows worldwide.

As her career went stratospheric, one person was never far from her side.

Her mum Tzipora.

Known as Tzipi, Bar's mum had also been a successful model in her younger days.

Now she took the reins as Bar's business manager, overseeing all of her financial affairs.

In spring 2006, Bar, then 21, was photographed with Hollywood superstar, Leonardo DiCaprio.

The *Titanic* heart-throb, then 32, had dated a string of supermodels, including Gisele Bündchen and Amber Valletta.

Now Bar was his latest squeeze, having met at a Las Vegas bash.

Over the next five years, the couple were spotted together at glitzy parties in LA – where Leonardo had a number of luxury homes – as well as hanging out on Malibu beach and courtside at Lakers basketball games.

Their relationship had its ups and downs – in 2009, they split for six months, before reuniting in 2010.

In 2011, they called it quits for good and Leonardo went on to date other models.

But Bar was ready to settle down.

She married Israeli businessman Adi Ezra, then 40, in September 2015.

Glided down the aisle in a stunning Chloé gown.

But weeks later, in December 2015, the newlyweds' world collapsed.

Police raided Bar's Tel Aviv home.

Arrested the supermodel and her mum. Hauled them in for questioning.

But why?

Israeli authorities accused them of tax fraud worth millions.

Said they had used legal loopholes.

Failed to report discounts on luxury goods, perks and freebies that should've been subjected to income tax.

Authorities accused them of tax fraud worth millions

For years, Bar and her mum had claimed she didn't live in Israel.

Said that, as an international supermodel, she travelled the world for her work.

As Israeli law stated that citizens who didn't live in the country full time weren't obliged to pay tax on income earnt abroad, Bar hadn't been taxed on a huge wedge of her modelling earnings.

But authorities claimed she had been lying about her residency.

Said that her permanent home had always been Israel and that she owed the state millions.

The pair were bailed.

As months became years, investigations continued.

Meanwhile, Bar became a mum – had two daughters in 2016 and 2017.

Posted smiling snaps of herself with her husband Adi and their kids.

But in 2017, she was rearrested and charged with tax fraud.

Incredibly, in 2019, she was chosen to present the Eurovision Song Contest in Tel Aviv – appearing on screens worldwide as a global ambassador for Israel.

Yet, in the months that followed, she and Tzipi appeared at a string of court hearings in Tel Aviv.

Prosecutors claimed Bar had earnt $7.2million (over £5million) between 2009 and 2012, when she'd claimed to be living overseas to avoid paying Israeli tax.

Leonardo DiCaprio's name was dragged into the sorry affair, too.

The defence team claimed Bar moved to LA to be with him.

Said this was the reason she didn't have to pay Israeli tax on her supermodel earnings back

WORDS: LOUISE BATY. PHOTOS: GETTY

Mum Tzipi and Bar before the scandal

In LA with Leonardo DiCaprio in 2010

then.

After all, there were enough paparazzi shots to prove she'd spent extensive time in the USA with Leo.

But prosecutors rubbished her claims.

Accused her of using her relationship with the Oscar winner as cover.

They argued that just because she'd been staying with her famous then-boyfriend, it didn't qualify them as a 'family unit'.

Said she couldn't claim Leonardo's US residence for herself to avoid paying taxes she owed.

Bar was also accused of paying for an interior designer, and a rental car with publicity, and not declaring it.

Tzipi was accused of not declaring income and assisting Bar to commit tax fraud – secretly leasing out apartments for Bar under different names in order to create a false image of where the supermodel really lived.

Bar claimed to have known nothing about the efforts to conceal her earnings.

But in July 2020 – six months after having her third baby – the supermodel and her mum confessed evading paying taxes on income nearing $10million (nearly £8million), having signed a plea bargain.

'In the relevant time period, Bar was in her early 20s, was working as an international model, and was not involved in financial matters,' Bar's lawyers told the Press.

'Today, she is taking responsibility for mistakes that were made.'

Two months later, the pair were back in court for sentencing.

Bar Refaeli entered the Tel Aviv courtroom wearing a beige T-shirt and face mask due to COVID-19 regulations.

She was sentenced to nine months community service.

Tzipi Refaeli was jailed for 16 months.

They were ordered to pay a $1.5 million (over £1million) fine on top of millions in backdated taxes.

It brought to an end the prolonged case against one of Israel's biggest stars and left a stain on Bar Refaeli's previously unblemished, glittering career.

Supermodel Bar: all smiles despite the criminal charges

TAKEN IN THE NIGHT

Hunting predator

For years, he stalked the streets, waiting for the opportunity to pounce

Pulling on a black skirt and rock t-shirt, Morgan Harrington, 20, excitedly got ready.

'Do you think I can dance in these boots?' she asked her mum Gil.

Then, grabbing the Metallica concert tickets from the fridge door, she slicked on some lippy, told her mum she loved her, and set off to meet her mates.

It was 17 October 2009, and time for a few drinks, and a break from her studies at Virginia Tech university.

Morgan, a music fan, was a gifted artist, with dreams of becoming a teacher.

At the John Paul Jones Arena, in Charlottesville, Virginia, USA, Morgan and her three friends danced to the opening act.

Only, then Morgan went to the toilet.

And never returned.

Her mates called her, and Morgan said she'd somehow ended up outside the arena.

Due to the 'no re-entry' policy, she wasn't allowed back inside.

Morgan told them not to worry, she'd make her own way home.

And vanished.

The next day, her frantic parents reported her missing.

A team of sniffer dogs, helicopters and volunteers searched day and night.

Reports came in of sightings of Morgan.

Alone outside the arena, confused, with blood on her chin, perhaps from a fall.

Then seen on a nearby bridge at 9.23am – possibly hitchhiking.

Two days later, officers found her purse and phone, discarded in a car park.

'If Morgan hears this, please come home,' her father Dan told a press conference.

Even Metallica donated money towards a reward.

Three weeks later, Morgan's distinctive rock t-shirt was found laid out on some bushes, a mile and a half away from the concert.

Presented like some sort of sick trophy.

Tests on the t-shirt found unknown DNA, which was also connected to an attempted murder and sexual assault 100 miles away in 2005.

The victim had described her attacker, a sketch made of his face. Yet the man had not been found.

Her t-shirt was presented like some sick trophy

Three months after Morgan vanished, a farmer checking his fences stumbled across human remains.

Tragically, tests confirmed that it was Morgan. She'd been horrifically attacked, her bones snapped, her skull brutally fractured.

A post mortem found the cause of death to be homicidal violence of undetermined origin.

The local community was terrified as stories of a violent sexual predator haunted the neighbourhood.

But years went by without an arrest.

Then, five years later, in September 2014, another bright young woman found herself wandering the streets alone.

Hannah Graham, 18, was in her second year at the University of Virginia.

Born in the UK, she'd moved to America aged 5, becoming a top student. She was a talented athlete and gifted musician, played saxophone in a jazz band.

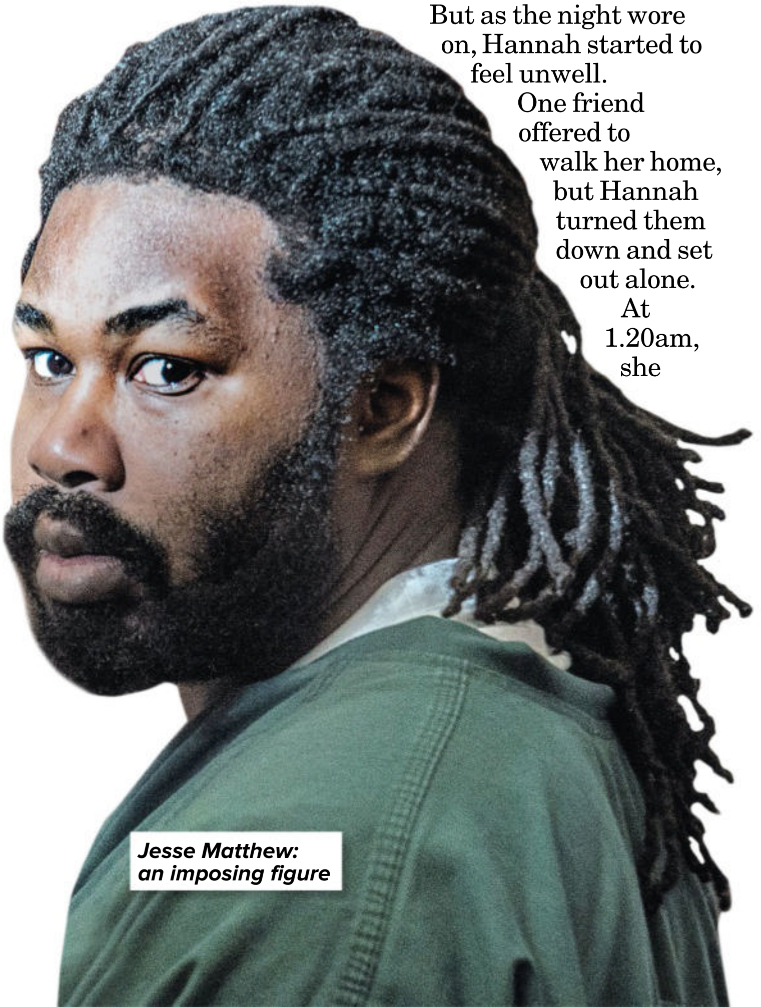
On the night of 12 September 2014, Hannah went to a ski-club party at a local bar.

At 6ft tall, with auburn hair and a face full of freckles, she cut a striking figure dressed in a glittery crop top.

But as the night wore on, Hannah started to feel unwell.

One friend offered to walk her home, but Hannah turned them down and set out alone.

At 1.20am, she



Jesse Matthew: an imposing figure

the

Morgan wanted to be a teacher

Hannah had enjoyed a night out with friends

DNA results nailed the killer

sent a text to a friend saying that she was lost.

Disorientated and vulnerable.

Exactly as Morgan Harrington had been.

And just like Morgan, Hannah had vanished into the night.

This time, drones were also used to search for the missing student.

CCTV had picked up Hannah outside a local Irish bar.

Unsteady on her feet, she was seen walking, sometimes running.

Witnesses told police they'd seen a tall man with dreadlocks approaching vulnerable Hannah, putting his arm round her shoulders.

Taking her to a bar for a drink.

The police soon identified the man as hospital worker and former taxi driver Jesse Matthew, then 34.

At 6ft 2in, he was described as a 'gentle giant' by friends.

But there was another side to Jesse...

A night owl, he was often seen along the stretch of bars in Charlottesville city centre.

With a habit of being touchy-feely with the ladies there.

Seemingly, he was a hard-to-miss character.

A search of his flat found Hannah's DNA on a pair of his shorts, and in his car.

Police arrested him.

And DNA results then linked Matthew to the 2005 attack, and Morgan's murder.

The final piece of the puzzle?

On the night that Morgan had vanished, Matthew had been driving his taxi.

He must've spotted her desperately trying to flag down a cab home, and he pounced.

Five weeks later, Hannah's remains were found at an abandoned property in a remote area, 10 miles away from where she had gone missing.

> **He was called a 'gentle giant', but had another side**

Her glittery crop top and jeans were found nearby.

Hannah had come to a brutal end, suffering suffocation or strangulation.

Her cause of death was ruled as homicidal violence.

Both girls had been snatched off the street, their bodies dumped just six miles apart.

In court in March 2016, Jesse Matthew pleaded guilty to two counts of first-degree murder, and two counts of abduction with intent to defile.

He'd agreed to plead guilty in order to avoid the death penalty.

Showed no emotion as the judge handed him four life sentences.

It was added to three life sentences he'd already been given for attempted murder, sexual assault and abduction in the 2005 attack.

Hannah Graham's parents hailed their brave daughter, who'd helped to capture a vile murderer hiding in plain sight, and given closure to a family left haunted for years.

There could be no more victims at the hands of predatory Jesse Matthews, but innocent girls had already paid the ultimate price.

WORDS: JENNY ACKLAND. PHOTOS (DNA IS LIBRARY PHOTO): GETTY, SHUTTERSTOCK

ECCENTRIC OR EVIL?

Beware the mad professor

Was this oddball academic as harmless as he seemed?

Dressed in period uniform, red military sash stretched across his portly stomach, the man held out his hand to the young woman.

Serene and beautiful, with flowers in her hair, she was wearing a flowing 19th-century-style white gown.

Guests at the stately ball watched as Professor Oleg Sokolov led his partner Anastasia Yeshchenko to the dance floor.

The couple were members of the academic elite in St Petersburg, Russia.

Prof Sokolov, 63, was an acclaimed historian who'd taught at the Sorbonne – the University of Paris.

An expert on French military history, especially political leader Napoleon Bonaparte, he'd been awarded France's highest order, the Légion d'Honneur.

Anastasia, 24, was an intelligent PhD student who'd co-written some of Sokolov's books.

They'd been together three years, having met when she'd been his student at St Petersburg University.

The four-decade age gap didn't bother Anastasia.

But her police lieutenant mum and teacher dad, who lived 1,200 miles away, didn't approve.

Despite their concerns, Anastasia had moved in with her professor in a flat by St Petersburg's Moyka river.

Described as 'quiet', 'sweet' and the 'ideal student', Anastasia was obsessed with French history, too.

The pair loved dressing up in costumes from the Napoleonic era.

Sokolov was a major figure in the world of historical re-enactments.

He organised costume balls and picnics, recreated Napoleonic wars, like the infamous Battle of Waterloo.

Rode his horse around mock battlegrounds in replica military uniform with medals and a sword.

He gave Anastasia the nickname 'Josephine' in homage to Napoleon's wife, and asked to be addressed as 'Sire'.

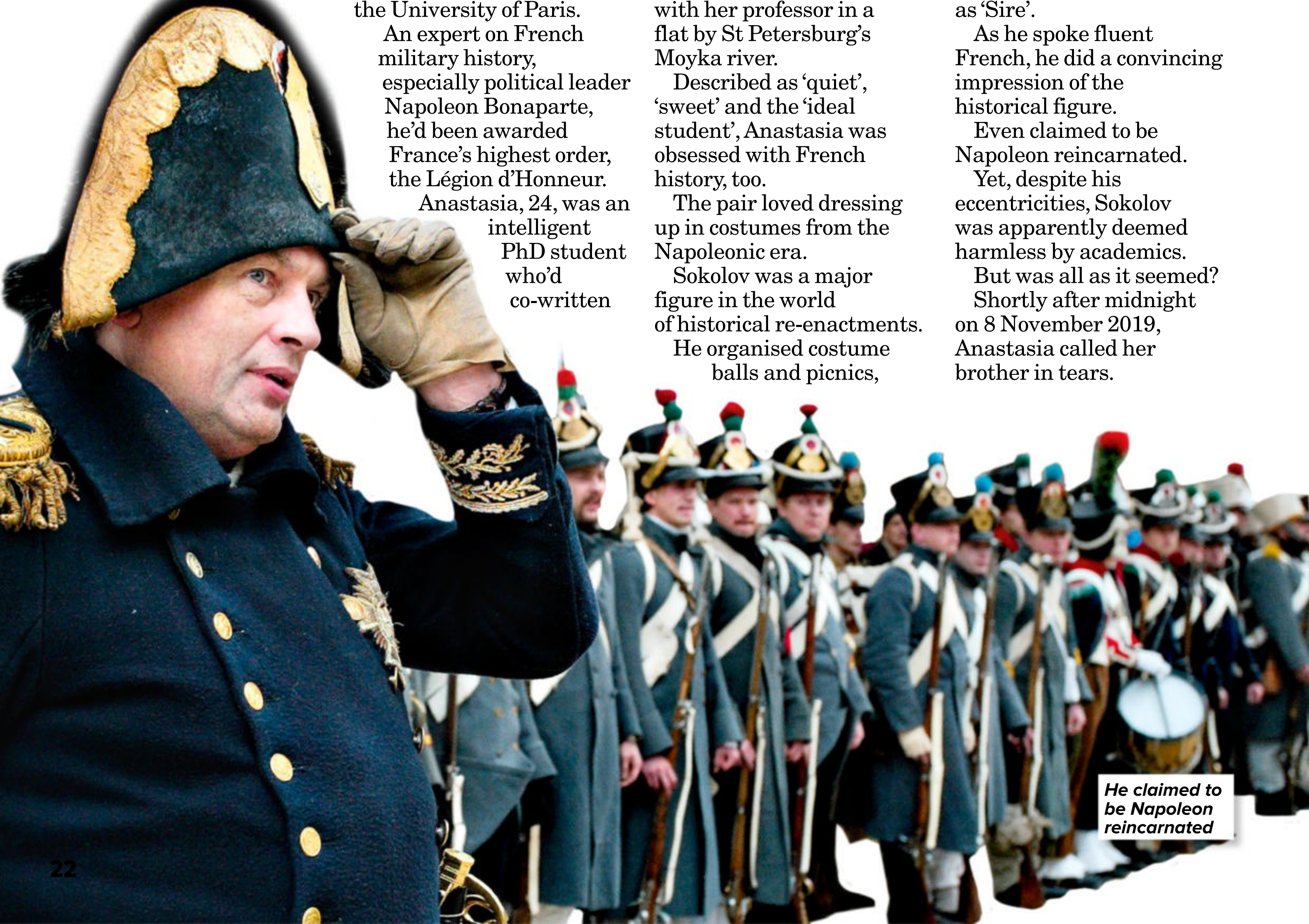
As he spoke fluent French, he did a convincing impression of the historical figure.

Even claimed to be Napoleon reincarnated.

Yet, despite his eccentricities, Sokolov was apparently deemed harmless by academics.

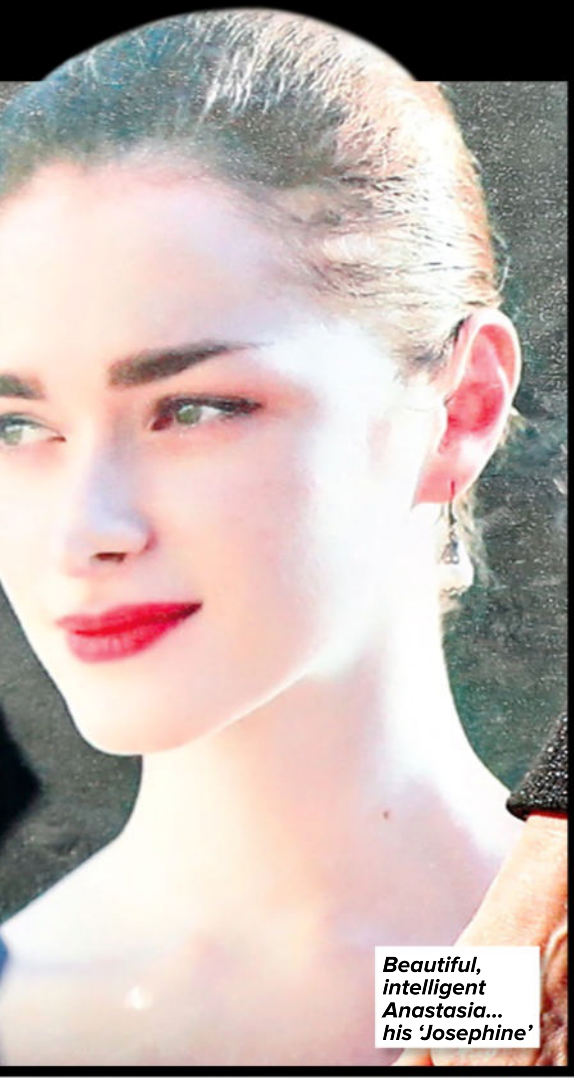
But was all as it seemed?

Shortly after midnight on 8 November 2019, Anastasia called her brother in tears.



He claimed to be Napoleon reincarnated

Sokolov: cruel and abusive



Beautiful, intelligent Anastasia... his 'Josephine'

Said she and the professor had been arguing.

The row had been sparked by Sokolov's jealousy.

He was furious that she'd been invited to a friend's birthday party.

The young woman told her brother she was going to spend the night in a hostel.

Just before 2am, they spoke again and Anastasia claimed she was fine.

That was the last anyone ever heard from her.

The next day, CCTV footage recorded a man stumbling along the Moyka river embankment.

He then swung two bags over the edge.

Later, the same man was spotted floundering in the freezing waters of the Moyka.

He was fished out, drunk and incoherent, clutching a rucksack.

It was Professor Sokolov.

He was taken to hospital with hypothermia.

But when police checked his bag, they discovered horrifying contents.

Severed body parts.

Two arms.

A pistol, too.

Sokolov was arrested.

Police raided his flat and uncovered a grim scene.

A decapitated body, a severed head in an Ikea bag.

It was the body of Anastasia Yeshchenko.

The police also found a sawn-off shotgun, knives, an axe and ammunition.

In custody, the professor confessed.

Told police that he'd killed his lover before sawing off her head, arms and legs.

Said he'd planned to dispose of the body parts before taking his own life in public dressed as Napoleon.

But he'd drunkenly fallen into the river instead.

Anastasia's devastated mum Galina travelled to St Petersburg to buy a wedding dress for her daughter to wear in her coffin. Her only chance to wear one.

Heartbreaking.

As news of the killing spread, other students came forward with claims about the professor's behaviour.

His aggression worsened when he dressed up

There were claims Sokolov had targeted students before Anastasia.

Had a preference for young women with brown hair who bore a resemblance to Napoleon's wife Josephine.

He'd charm them by inviting them to his historical events.

But he had apparently been abusive.

At a hearing, which began in June 2020, the court heard the full extent of his cruelty.

Sokolov – sitting in a glass box – pleaded guilty to murdering his girlfriend but bizarrely claimed she'd 'turned into a monster' and driven him to 'a state of complete insanity'.

The court heard violence had erupted during a champagne-fuelled row.

Sokolov had shot Anastasia with a sawn-off shotgun, made from a Soviet rifle and stylised as a 19th-century cavalry gun.

The bullet hit just above her right eye.

'He then squeezed the victim's neck with his hands, causing a fracture,' the prosecution said.

'In order to inflict death to the victim, who still showed signs of life, he fired three more shots into the head.'

Afterwards, he'd locked Anastasia in his flat and drank brandy with friends.

Later, he bought a saw and an axe before returning to dismember the corpse.

He'd dumped body parts in the Moyka river.

But drunkenly toppled in, holding the bag containing Anastasia's arms.

Utterly horrific.

Napoleon's reign as French Emperor had ended with defeat at Waterloo, now Oleg Sokolov's reputation had come to a watery end, too.

In December 2020, he was jailed for 12 years, 6 months.

Stripped of all his honours.

But the sentence reignited debate about Russia's relaxing of sentences for domestic violence.

After the trial, a previous girlfriend told how Sokolov had controlled and abused her in their relationship.

Said that his aggression worsened when he was dressed as Napoleon – and that he'd once tied her to a chair and beaten her.

Thankfully, she had managed to get away from the 'Russian Napoleon'.

Lived to tell the tale.

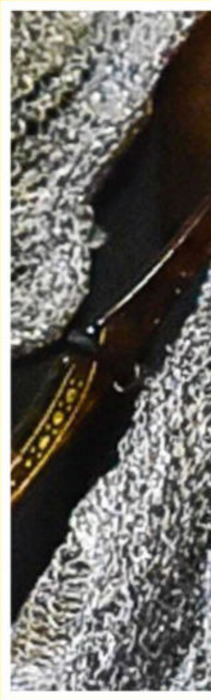
If only the same could be said for Anastasia Yeshchenko.

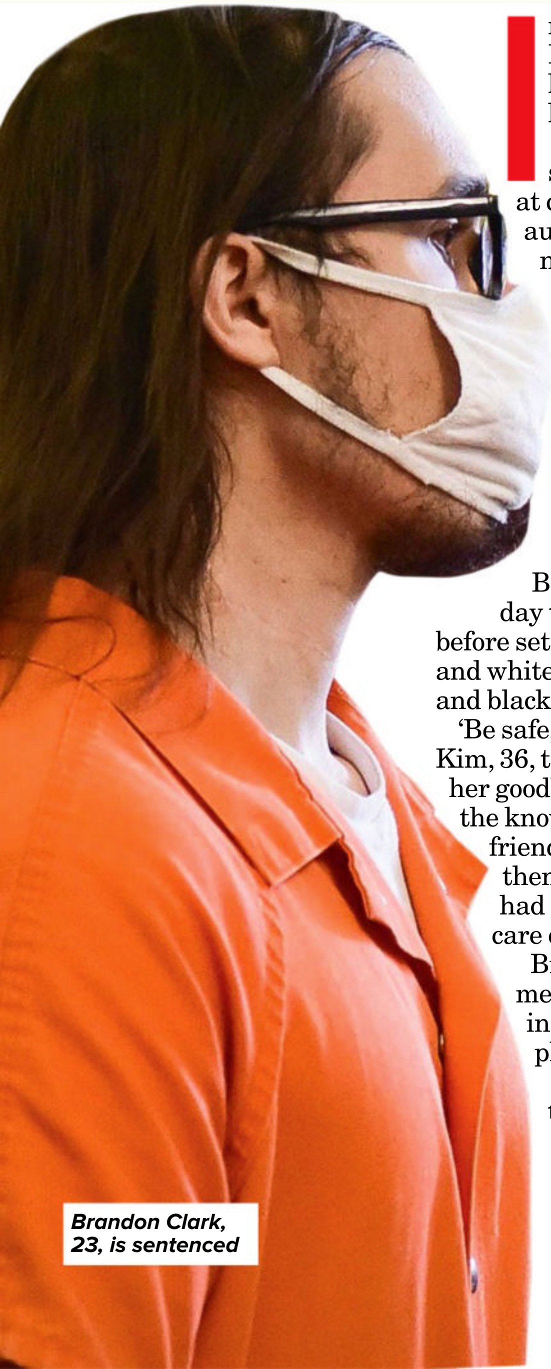
WORDS: LOUISE BATY. PHOTOS: GETTY

EVIL ONLINE

Killed for clicks...?

Social media gave Bianca Devins space to be herself, but a monster was lurking





Brandon Clark, 23, is sentenced

In July 2019, Bianca Devins, 17, had just finished high school.

She planned to study Psychology at college in the autumn – but, for now, she had a fun, carefree summer ahead of her.

And that weekend, she was travelling 250 miles to see a concert in New York.

Brimming with excitement, Bianca spent the day trying on outfits, before settling on a black and white checked skirt and black vest.

'Be safe,' her mum Kim, 36, told her, hugging her goodbye. Content in the knowledge Bianca's friend Brandon Clark, then 21 – who Kim had met – would take care of her daughter.

Bianca had first met Brandon on instant-messaging platform Discord.

Like most teenagers, she lived much of her life online.

Loved sharing Instagram posts showing her dramatic eyeliner and candyfloss-coloured hair.

But, for Bianca, the internet wasn't just about posting selfies.

Social media offered the teen a chance to escape.

Diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, Bianca found she could be someone different in the online world.

'That was her safe place,' said Kim. 'She could be anyone, a different persona who had more confidence.'

Bianca could talk freely, without judgement, about her mental-health struggles.

> **In this world, Bianca could be someone different**

Kim was happy for her socially anxious daughter to interact with her 3,000 followers on Instagram.

Having online friends seemed like progress.

Yet she made sure she monitored Bianca's accounts.

And she always met any of Bianca's new online friends in person.

Including Brandon Clark, who came to their home one evening in early May 2019.

'He seemed like a very nice kid,' Kim explained. 'He was very polite.'

When Bianca and Brandon arranged to see Canadian singer Nicole Dollanganger together, Bianca assured Kim they were just mates.

She excitedly told her mum she was meeting a boy named Alex, who she'd also met on Discord, at the concert, too.

Kim agreed – after all, Brandon would be there to protect Bianca.

The concert didn't disappoint.

Bianca met Alex, held his hand and kissed him.

It'd been a magical night.

But as Brandon drove Bianca home, the mood soured. He was furious about the kiss, claiming that Bianca used him.

Bianca made it clear she and Brandon were just friends, before falling asleep in the back seat.

At this point, Brandon decided to put a sickening idea he'd been planning into action.

Because what Bianca didn't know was that her new friend had been preparing to kill her.

And livestream it.

While Bianca slept, Brandon set up a camera on

Justice for Bianca

Supporters attended the trial

Pink-haired Bianca: a 'bright light'

the dashboard.

Reached for the large, black-handled knife he'd been hiding.

In a final Instagram post, he shared a photo of the road as he drove.

Here comes Hell. It's redemption, right? he wrote.

And when they arrived back in their home town of Utica, he pulled into a dead-end road.

Gently nudged Bianca awake.

As she blinked her eyes open, Brandon pounced, 'sawing' through the muscles of her throat.

Brandon's camera recorded it all, including Bianca's final breaths.

After the brutal slaughter, Brandon took photos of Bianca's bloodied, nearly decapitated corpse, and posted them on social media.

Underneath one, Brandon wrote, *I'm sorry Bianca*.

The followers who saw the twisted images were concerned and frightened.

A sick prank?

As more questions were asked, the images went viral across several social-media platforms.

Horrifically, Kim learnt of her precious daughter's death when wicked strangers sent her photos of Bianca's body.

Look at your daughter now, and *Your daughter's a wh*re*, some were captioned.

Mercifully, Kim never actually saw the photos, spared the pain by loved ones who took her phone.

By 7.20am, Utica police had been inundated with calls, and were trying to find the teen, when Brandon himself called.

Threatening to harm himself.

Officers tracked him down to a wooded area at the end of the quiet, residential road.

As officers approached, Brandon began stabbing himself in the neck.

Then he lay across a green tarpaulin covering Bianca's body, pulled out his phone and took selfies.

After a short struggle, Brandon Clark was arrested and taken to hospital to undergo emergency surgery.

Social-media platforms worked to remove the disturbing images, while users flooded their feeds with images of pink clouds tagged #RIPBianca, hoping their tributes would drown out the graphic pictures.

In February 2020, Brandon Clark pleaded guilty to second-degree murder.

He told the judge that Bianca 'didn't deserve what happened to her'.

'I need to realise what I did I can't undo, as much as I want to. I have to face it,' he said.

He explained that, although he posted images of Bianca's murder, he didn't livestream or share the video, insisting he'd only filmed the slaying to watch himself later.

Clark was sentenced to 25 years to life.

Bianca's family are determined to ensure that he's never released.

And while their ordeal continues, Kim believes she has seen the best and worst of the online world.

'I saw the most evil side of the internet, which was so unexpected,' she said, referring to the sickening trolling she experienced. 'But I also saw this amazing compassion where people just wanted to erase the gore.'

Kim believes that it is in this digital world of unrelenting support that her daughter found the love she needed to shine brightly.

'Bianca is much more than those photos. She's much more than her death, and she's much more than a murder case,' said Kim.

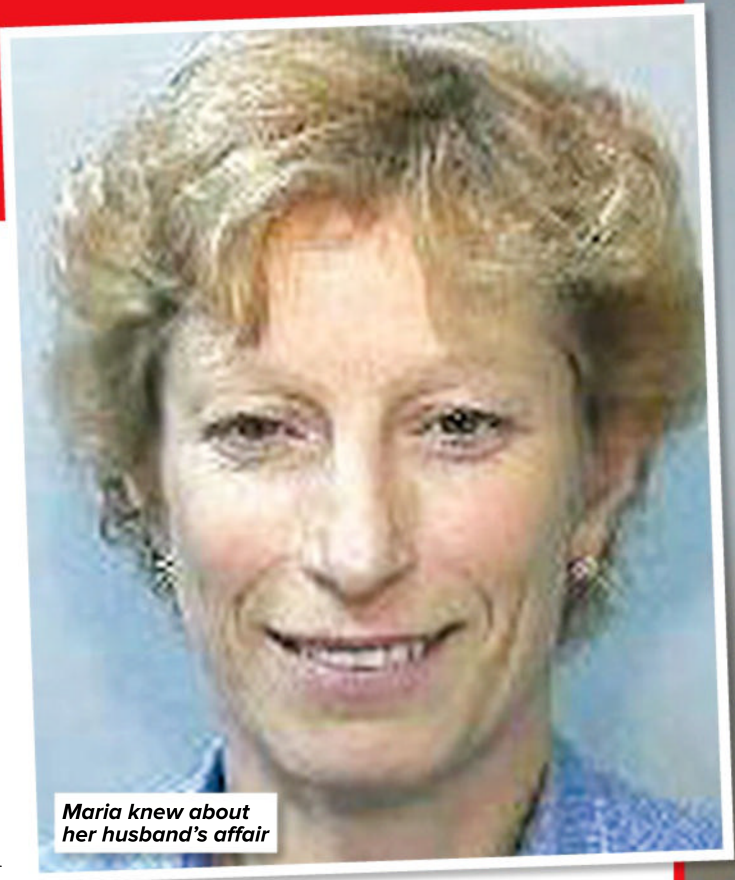
'She's an artist, a sister, a daughter, a friend…and her bright light was taken entirely too soon.'

WORDS: FIONA FORD. PHOTOS: USA TODAY NETWORK/SIPA USA

TWISTED ROMANCE

Brainwashed

A sordid affair ended with two dead and one behind bars



Maria knew about her husband's affair

When Maria Korp failed to collect her son Damien, then 11, from school on the afternoon of 9 February 2005, there was panic.

The school called his dad Joe Korp, 47, to come and get him.

Maria, 50, had never missed pick-up before.

In fact, her alarmed family claimed she'd 'crawl over broken glass', to collect her son.

Maria's car was missing.

And she hadn't turned up for work that morning.

Joe had last seen his wife at their home in Mickleham, a suburb of Melbourne, Australia, at 6.30am that morning.

Detectives feared the worst, especially when Joe admitted that the couple had been having marital problems.

In fact, in December 2004, Maria had taken out an intervention order against Joe, preventing him 'assaulting, harassing, molesting, threatening or intimidating' her.

Several family members, including Laura De Gois, Maria's older daughter from a previous relationship, claimed that Joe was having an affair.

And Maria knew about it.

Laura, 27, also said she'd heard a scream at 6.30am that morning.

But when she'd looked out the window, it appeared her mum and Joe had both left for work.

While searching the house, officers asked Joe if there was anyone who might want to harm his wife.

Immediately, Joe said a name: Tania Herman.

Then aged 38, she was his mistress. Or had been.

He claimed he'd ended their affair and reconciled with Maria.

But could Joe be trusted?

Maria's friends and family didn't think so.

Then another friend, Gail, came forward.

A month earlier, Maria had handed her a bag filled with evidence that she'd collected proving Joe's affair with Tania.

Along with instructions to hand it in to police if anything happened to her.

Meanwhile, police issued a description of Maria's missing red Mazda.

And, on 13 February, a security guard at the Shrine of Remembrance, a war memorial in Melbourne, reported it.

By then, the car been there for four days.

And when officers opened the boot, there was Maria, battered and bruised, marks around her neck.

Unable to find her pulse, and overcome with emotion, Detective Narelle Fraser instinctively climbed in.

'I wanted to hold her and tell her that she was safe now, that no one would ever hurt her again,' she said.

And when she placed her head on Maria's chest, she felt the tiniest movement.

'She was breathing! I couldn't believe it. I started screaming, "She's alive! She's alive."'

Maria was rushed to hospital and placed in a coma.

And while doctors battled to save his wife, Joe Korp and his lover Tania Herman were arrested for conspiracy and attempted murder.

She bundled the body into the boot of the car

In a bizarre twist, intimate pictures of Maria and Joe were discovered on a website for swingers.

Were they Maria's last-ditch attempt to save her crumbling marriage to a philandering husband?

Or a decoy, posted by Joe to paint a picture of a happy, sexually adventurous couple?

Because detectives were convinced Joe and Tania had conspired to kill Maria.

The lovers had met online around a year earlier.

He'd travel two hours to visit her regularly, telling Maria he was in Sydney on business.

They began planning a life together, with Tania selling her home to move closer to Joe.

Even renting a flat under the name Tania Herman Korp.

In June 2005, Tania Herman pleaded guilty to the charges.

She claimed she'd been blinded by love.

to kill

Joe protested his innocence

Only Tania's story remained...

Brainwashed by Joe's declarations and promises of a future together.

She confessed that, under Joe's instruction, she lay in wait in the Korps' garage.

'Don't let that b***h out alive,' he'd told her.

Wearing a balaclava, Tania had pulled on gloves.

Grabbed Maria as she left for work, strangling her from behind using a bag strap.

Maria had screamed once, frantically fought for her life.

But when she finally went limp, Tania bundled her into the boot of Maria's car.

Tania admitted hearing 'breathing noises' coming from the back of the car.

But said that she'd panicked.

Dumped the car with Maria locked inside.

Still alive.

After agreeing to testify against Joe Korp, Tania Herman was jailed for 12 years and told she'd serve at least nine.

Korp, who'd been released on bail, was still protesting his innocence.

And things looked bleak for Maria.

Her head injuries, severe dehydration and oxygen deprivation to the brain meant she couldn't be saved.

After five months in a vegetative state, she was taken off life-support and died 10 days later, in August 2005.

It was expected the charges against Joe Korp would now be upgraded to murder.

Yet, he died by suicide on the day of Maria's funeral, surrounded by pictures of his late wife.

It was a dramatic end to a case that had gripped Australia.

And with Joe and Maria dead, only Tania's account of events remained.

There'd been a time when she'd believed she couldn't live without Joe Korp.

Would do anything for him – even kill.

But in 2014, she walked free, after serving nine years – straight into the arms of her female lover, a former inmate.

Tania Herman: the sole survivor of this shocking and twisted saga.

Maria's Mazda, and (right) a teary Korp leaves hospital after visiting his wife

WORDS: ASHLEIGH PAGE. PHOTOS: GETTY

EVIL PREDATOR

Rampage of a killer

How many would die before he could be stopped?

Best friends Mary Ann Pryor, 17, and Lorraine Kelly, 16, were hoping for a fun day out.

Setting off to a shopping centre in Paramus, New Jersey, on 9 August 1974, they planned to buy swimsuits.

Only, when Mary Ann failed to come home by her 10pm curfew, her parents Wanda and James called the police.

Lorraine's family hadn't heard from her, either.

Witnesses saw the girls trying to hitchhike to the shops

Witnesses told the police they'd seen the girls trying to hitchhike to the shops.

They'd last been spotted climbing into a car, driven by a white man.

For five days, the girls' families held out hope.

But on 14 August, police found two nude, battered and decomposing bodies face down in woodland in Montvale, New Jersey, 11 miles from the shops.

Mary Ann's parents and older sister Nancy heard the news on the radio.

Then police officers knocked on their door.

They were taken to the mortuary, where they identified Mary Ann from her gold cross necklace.

Lorraine was found with a beaded bracelet and a necklace inscribed with her name.

Investigators hit a dead end in the hunt for the killer, but, five years later, there was another discovery.

Responding to a motel-room fire in Times Square, New York, in December 1979, the firefighters found two badly burnt bodies, both women.

Fireman James Rogers carried one out, hoping to save her.

'I was preparing to give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation when I suddenly noticed there was no head,' he said.

The women had been strangled, their heads and hands severed before being set alight.

The killer had left nothing that could identify him, not even his victims' missing body parts.

One victim was named as sex worker Deedeh Goodarzi, 22, but the other victim, thought to be around 16, was never identified.

The Press dubbed the murderer the Torso Killer.

In May 1980, he appeared to have struck again after firefighters found the body of sex worker Jean Reyner, 25, in a New York hotel.

Her neck had been slashed, she had bite marks on her body, and the killer had left her severed breasts on the bed's headboard.

A month earlier, another sex worker, Valerie Ann Street, had also been killed.

Strangled, handcuffed and stuffed under a bed in a New Jersey hotel.

While each crime scene had been cleaned meticulously, the killer had left a fingerprint on the handcuffs used on Valerie.

Soon after, a sex worker covered in bite marks was found beaten, left for dead in a New Jersey car park.

She survived and told the police she'd been attacked by a customer, an average-looking man in his 30s.

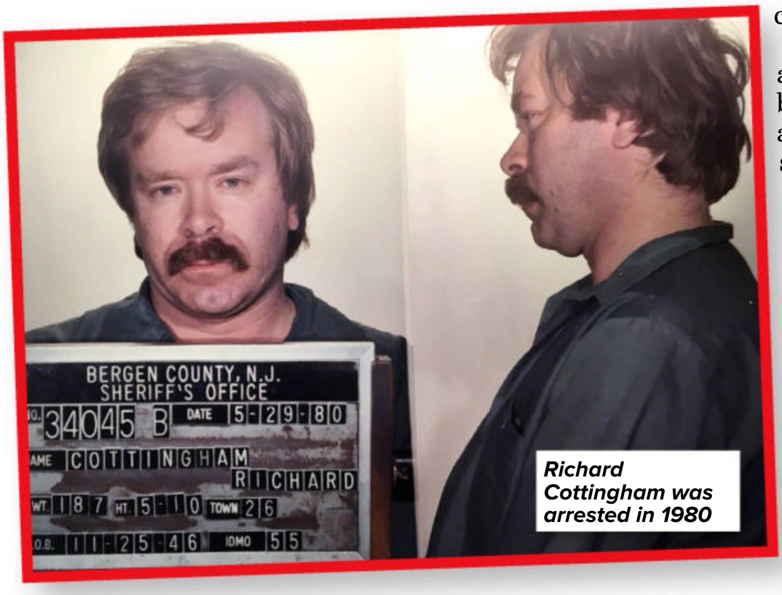
Days later, on 22 May 1980, a maid at a New York motel heard screams coming from a room.

The police found a teenager inside – she'd been handcuffed, bitten and stabbed, but she was still alive.

Richard Cottingham, then aged 33, was apprehended in the motel car park and charged with rape and attempted murder.

On the face of it, Cottingham, a computer operator, seemed a respectable family man.

Born in the Bronx, he'd grown up with his



Richard Cottingham was arrested in 1980

Cottingham, centre, then 74, finally confessed

Lorraine Kelly set off shopping…

…with best friend Mary Ann Pryor

parents and three sisters in a home in River Vale, New Jersey.

He'd been an accomplished sportsman at high school, was never in trouble with the police.

He'd worked in Manhattan, got married and had children before moving out of the city.

Yet investigators found overwhelming evidence that he was the Torso Killer.

His fingerprint matched the one left on the handcuffs and, in his tidy New Jersey home, cops discovered a locked 'trophy room' where he'd stashed jewellery and clothing belonging to his victims.

Over four trials in the early 1980s, Cottingham was convicted of five murders, including that of nurse Maryann Carr, 27, whose body had been found in a hotel car park in 1977.

In court, surviving victims talked of being drugged, raped and tortured.

And, on the stand, Cottingham confessed to killing for sexual pleasure.

The Torso Killer was incarcerated at Trenton State Prison, where his sentence totalled nearly 300 years.

From behind bars, he revelled in his notoriety, and boasted about having committed more crimes.

He told investigators he'd picked up a couple of girls near a shopping centre…

'I disposed of them out of the area,' he confessed.

In January 2020, he confessed to murdering three teenage girls in the late 1960s.

Then, in April 2021, Cottingham, then 74, finally confessed to murdering Mary Ann Pryor and Lorraine Kelly.

Sitting in a wheelchair during a virtual hearing at Bergen County Prosecutor's Office in Paramus, the white-haired, bearded serial killer admitted seizing the girls on that day in August 1974.

He'd forced Mary Ann into a hotel room by threatening to hurt Lorraine, then raped them both. He'd tied them up at night to stop them escaping while he slept.

Then he'd drowned the girls in the bath and dumped their bodies in the woods.

His lawyer John Bruno said the murderer had finally confessed to bring closure to the girls' grieving families.

'He feels relief knowing he has come clean,' Bruno said.

But for his victims' loved ones, there is no relief.

Mary Ann's sister Nancy said she'd never forget the moment she had to identify her younger sister's body.

'I still have that image in my head,' she said. 'That's something you can't erase.'

Cottingham has since confessed to even more murders – his rein of terror across New Jersey and New York revealed to be so much more horrifying than could have ever been imagined.

WORDS: LOUISE BATY. PHOTOS: BERGEN COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE, SHUTTERSTOCK

Doctor of death

Jack the Ripper wasn't the only serial killer who stalked Victorian London's streets...

On 7 October 1891, a man clad in a mackintosh and top hat took lodgings at a London house.

His name was Dr Thomas Neill Cream and his new home was a stone's throw from St Thomas' hospital, where he'd once been a medical student.

Born in Scotland in 1850, he'd been brought up in Canada, the son of a wealthy businessman.

Victorian London was a maze of grimy slums, thick with factory smog and, to its impoverished citizens, Cream was a prestigious doctor, educated, well-dressed and well-travelled.

One rainy night on 13 October, shortly after Cream's arrival, prostitute Ellen Donworth, 19, was on Waterloo Road, opposite a pub, touting for business.

Suddenly, she collapsed.

Helped to her nearby room by a passer-by, her body trembled and her face twitched.

'A tall, dark, cross-eyed man gave me something to drink,' she said.

But before she made it to hospital, Ellen was dead. Had been poisoned.

Yet detectives concluded she'd drunk the fatal draught herself, depressed following the recent death of her newborn baby.

Then, on 20 October, alcoholic prostitute Matilda Clover, 27, died writhing, screaming and convulsing.

'That man Fred has poisoned me!' she cried.

Witnesses said 'Fred' was a well-dressed man in a top hat.

But Matilda's cause of death was listed as delirium.

It had been three years since the killer known as Jack the Ripper had gruesomely terrorised the city, slaughtering five prostitutes.

Now, it seemed, another serial killer was quietly at work, and detectives had no idea who it was... Dr Thomas Cream.

Cream had barely been in the city for two weeks when the 'man in a top hat' had tried to persuade Louisa Harvey to take acne pills after meeting her at the theatre. Suspicious, she'd ditched them using sleight of hand.

It was a lucky escape, as they were laced with strychnine – a pesticide now used to kill vermin and birds.

A prostitute touting for business suddenly collapsed

Angry that his killing spree was going unnoticed, Cream – a heavy drug user – wrote letters to wealthy, prominent men.

He brazenly accused them of the murders he himself had committed, attempting to blackmail them.

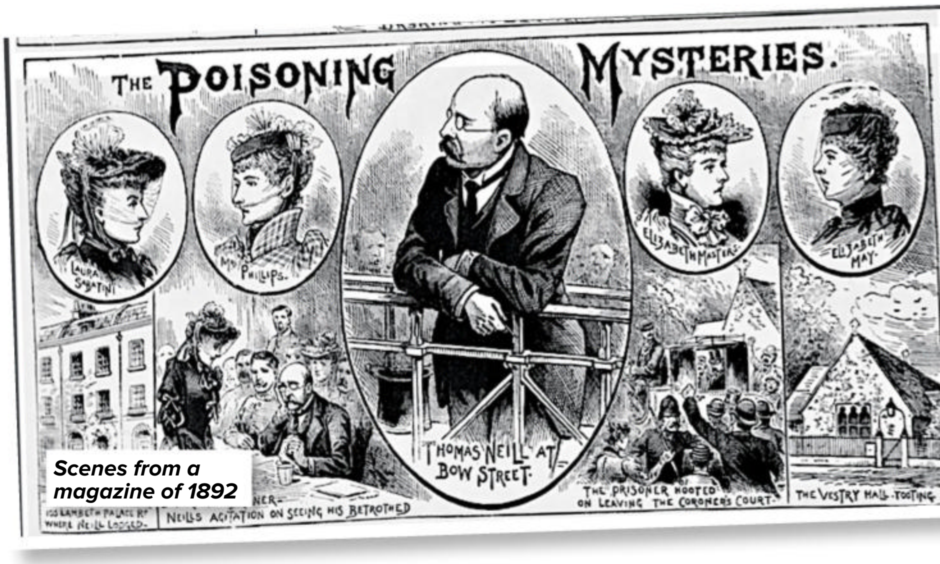
In January 1892, Cream briefly returned to Canada, where he tried to poison hotel maid in Quebec.

Yet, by April he was back in London, armed with a fresh supply of poison.

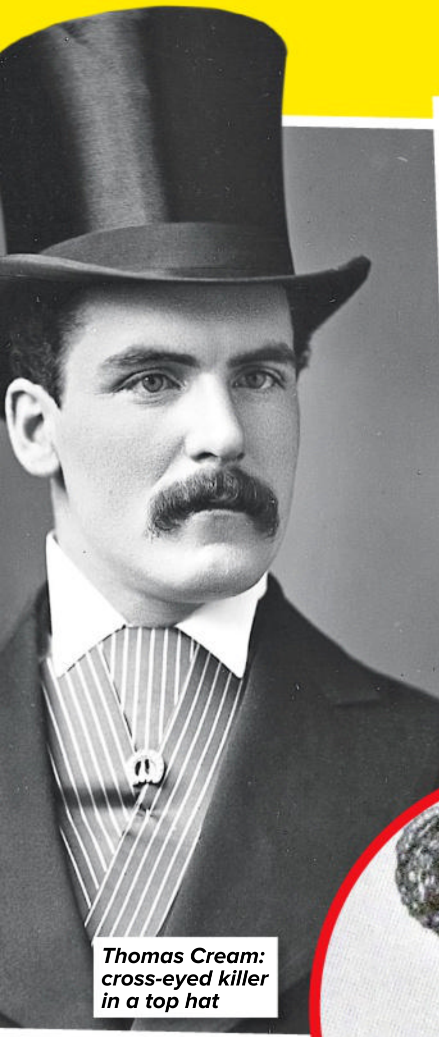
Within days, Emma Shrivell and Alice Marsh collapsed in agony.

Before she died, Emma managed to tell witnesses that a man named Fred, who was wearing a top hat, had given them both three long, thin pills.

Finally, detectives grew suspicious and began to connect the women's deaths through descriptions of 'Fred'.

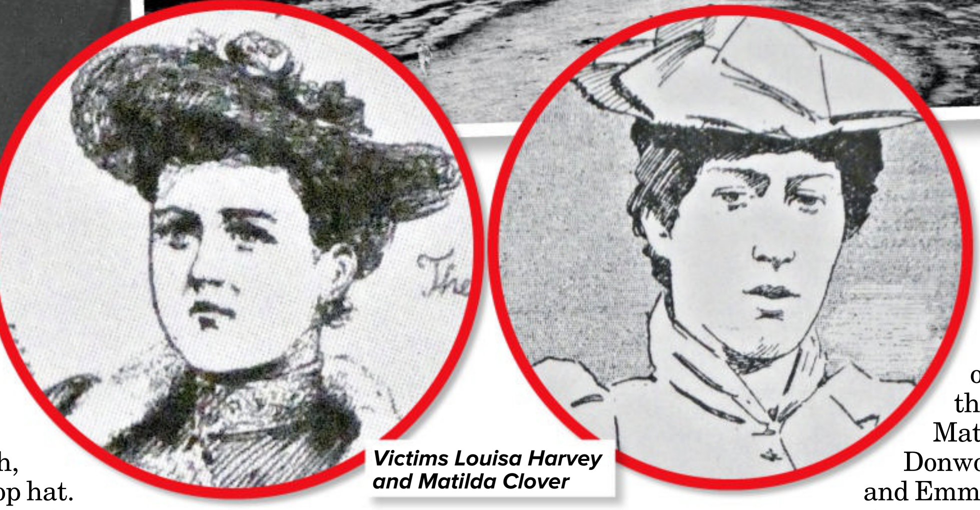

THE POISONING MYSTERIES.
LAURA SABATINI
MRS PHILLIPS.
THOMAS NEILL AT BOW STREET.
ELIZABETH MASTERS
ELIZABETH MAY.
155 LAMBETH PALACE RD WHERE NEILL LODGED.
NEILL'S AGITATION ON SEEING HIS BETROTHED
THE PRISONER HOOTED ON LEAVING THE CORONER'S COURT.
THE VESTRY HALL TOOTING

Scenes from a magazine of 1892



Thomas Cream: cross-eyed killer in a top hat

He'd studied at London's St Thomas' hospital



Victims Louisa Harvey and Matilda Clover

He was said to be a mustached, crossed-eyed man in his 40s, with glasses, a gold watch, walking stick and top hat.

After an inquest found Emma and Alice's murders to be strychnine poisoning, Ellen and Matilda's deaths were attributed to the same killer.

Police officers started looking for the suspect known as Fred.

And that May, PC George Comley spotted him outside a music hall and tailed him to his lodgings.

Officers watched the suspect from afar and questioned those with whom he'd spent time.

One prostitute who 'Fred' had visited said he claimed to be an agent for a US drug company and showed her a leather case full of vials.

He'd mixed her a special 'American drink', which she'd declined.

'You have got the wrong man!' Cream protested as he was arrested.

Yet his handwriting matched blackmail letters written by the killer.

Investigators dug deeper, and a detective was sent to America and Canada to look into Cream's past.

He'd fled Canada, his religious upbringing and a forced marriage in 1876 to a woman named Flora Brooks – escaping to study at medical school in London.

Flora, in fragile health, had died in August 1877, aged 24.

Cream's first victim?

By May 1879, Cream, now back in Canada and working as a GP in Ontario, had been suspected to have poisoned pregnant patient Kitty Gardner after she'd sought an abortion.

Yet there hadn't been enough evidence against him, and Cream skipped town to set up practice in Chicago, USA.

He'd soon been linked to the deaths of Mary Anne Faulkner, Ellen Stack and Sarah Alice Montgomery, who'd all gone to him for abortions.

Cream had stood trial for killing Mary Anne, but was cleared after hiring a crack team of lawyers with his father's money.

Then, in June 1881, stationmaster Daniel Stott had been poisoned. He'd been Cream's patient – and his lover Julia's husband.

Medication which Cream had prescribed Daniel was proved to contain poison.

He'd been jailed for life for murder but, after serving 10 years in prison, Cream's lawyers had won a pardon.

Freed, he'd headed again to London, where bodies had piled up…a sordid history.

Unsolved murders had followed Cream across three countries.

And finally, Scotland Yard had all the evidence it needed.

In October 1892, Dr Thomas Cream was found guilty of two counts of blackmail, the murders of Matilda Clover, Ellen Donworth, Alice Marsh and Emma Shrivell, and the attempted murder of Louisa Harvey.

Cream, also known as Dr Thomas Neill, was hanged at Newgate Prison on 15 November 1892.

According to the executioner, his last words were, 'I am Jack…'

Some theories claim Cream was also Jack the Ripper. Yet critics suggest a knife-wielding disemboweler, such as the Ripper, does not then become a cautious poisoner.

And official records show Cream was locked up when the Ripper was at large.

Still, like the Ripper, Cream's victims died in agony – and he was no less merciless in his methods.

***The Case of the Murderous Dr Cream: The Hunt for a Victorian Era Serial Killer* by Dean Jobb (£21.99, Algonquin) is out now.**

WORDS: LIANNE LA BORDE. PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS: ALAMY, HERITAGE IMAGES/GETTY

MASSACRE

Hunting for humans

He was a man on the edge, but what made him flip that summer afternoon?

People-hating James Huberty

Though he forced a smile for the odd photograph, it wasn't something James Oliver Huberty did often.

Described as bitter and angry, it was clear to all that he didn't like people.

His troubles had started in childhood.

A bout of polio left him with permanent walking difficulties, then, when he was 7, his mother abandoned the family to become a religious missionary.

'He was not a happy kid,' his father Earl admitted.

Eventually, Huberty got a job at a funeral parlour, embalming bodies.

His boss there described him as a 'loner', with flashes of temper.

He preferred Huberty to work with the dead as he wasn't good with the general public.

Meanwhile, Huberty married Etna in 1965 and had two daughters Zelia and Cassandra.

Many who knew him commented on Huberty's fascination with guns and shooting.

And when the Huberty family home burnt down in 1971, firefighters found the remnants of an extensive gun collection.

After that, Huberty became a welder.

His home life remained torrid, with rumours of domestic violence.

Neighbours made scores of complaints about the couple's vicious dogs.

After one of the family's German shepherds jumped on his landlord's car, scratching the paint, Huberty shot it dead.

Dressed in camouflage trousers, he said he was heading out

And, at night, Huberty spent hours practising with his handgun and rifle in his basement target range.

By then, he'd rebuilt his weapon collection, had a loaded firearm in 'every corner' of the house.

In October 1982, the welding plant closed and Huberty was laid off.

'I've got nothing to live for,' he told a co-worker.

Etna said he suffered a breakdown.

She'd been asking him to seek medical help for years.

In 1984, the family moved state from Ohio to San Ysidro, a district of San Diego, in California.

Huberty got work as a security guard, but that July, he was fired.

Etna's concerns about his mental health grew.

He even called a mental-health clinic for an appointment, yet they never phoned him back.

The next day, 18 July 1984, Huberty took his family for breakfast at McDonald's before spending the day at San Diego Zoo.

Then, in the late afternoon, dressed in camouflage trousers and a maroon T-shirt, James Huberty announced he was heading out.

'Where you going?' Etna asked.

'Hunting humans,' he sneered.

Assuming it was a bad joke, Etna took a nap.

But Huberty, 41, strode down San Ysidro Boulevard towards the famous golden arches of the McDonald's where he'd dined with his family hours earlier.

Assault rifle over one shoulder, pump-action shotgun over the other and

Traumatised workers are escorted away

WORDS: FRANCES LEATE. PHOTOS: ALAMY, GETTY

Police secure the siege area

a pistol tucked in his belt. Plus hundreds of bullets in a bag.

Three 11-year-old boys, Omar Hernandez, David Flores and Joshua Coleman were just outside.

Firing off a succession of bullets, Huberty gunned down all three youngsters.

Omar and David were shot dead, their bikes at their feet. But Joshua survived by playing dead.

Then Huberty entered the restaurant, guns raised.

A McDonald's employee reached for the phone to call the police.

But it was too late.

'I've killed thousands, and I'll kill thousands more,' Huberty screamed, firing round after round at men, women and children.

The carnage went on for 77 minutes.

Terrified cries rang out.

Windows smashed as police arrived and Huberty began spraying bullets into the streets.

Passers-by ducked for cover, while officers hid behind their cars.

Inside, Huberty paced up and down, shooting anyone who moved.

He was deluded, angry… and armed.

During the siege, Huberty heartlessly shot a 4-month-old baby who, along with her parents, survived.

The horror ended when a police sniper shot the gunman through the heart.

Huberty had already fired 257 rounds of ammunition, killed 21, including children,grandparents and an 8-month-old baby.

A further 19 innocent diners were wounded.

Bodies, bikes and items of clothing were strewn across the restaurant and outside.

One officer said the blood looked 'like ketchup'.

Victims were carried out by ashen-faced emergency workers, while traumatised officers bagged up evidence.

The local church held back-to-back funerals in the following weeks.

That September, McDonald's tore down the restaurant, an education centre was later built.

But nobody forgot the atrocity that had happened there.

Thirty years on, Huberty's eldest daughter Zelia, spoke out about that awful day.

She'd been able to see the McDonald's from her window in their flat, 140 metres away, and had watched the horror unfold.

Afterwards, her family were outcasts.

Zelia, aged 12 at the time of the massacre, and her sister, 10, weren't allowed to return to school, where victims and their children were. They had to enrol elsewhere under assumed names.

If she could turn back the clock, Zelia says she 'probably would have killed my father before any of this would have occurred'.

Just like all the survivors and the loved ones of those who died that day, she'll live with the consequences of her father's actions forever.

McDonald's
OVER 45 BILLION SERVED
McDonald's
DRIVE-THRU SERVICE

The building was later torn down

LETHAL BOY-RACERS

Dead in 60 seconds

In less than a minute, countless lives were destroyed forever

Happy, kind-hearted mum Jessica

Grieving husband David in court

Walking across the stage and reaching for his diploma, Cameron Herrin, then 18, could hear his family cheering him on.

It was May 2018 and he'd just graduated from Tampa Catholic School.

Afterwards, his mum and dad gave him the keys to a brand-new black Ford Mustang car.

Thrilled, Herrin took his graduation gift out for a spin. Racing around the streets of his hometown of Tampa, in Florida, his future stretched out before him.

Just two days later, on 23 May 2018, Herrin grabbed his keys and drove himself and his big brother Tristan, then 20, to the gym, with his pal John Barrineau, then 17, following in his gold Nissan.

Only, around midday, the two drivers stopped side by side at a set of traffic lights on Bayshore Boulevard.

The second the lights turned green, both cars floored the accelerator.

Ignoring the 40mph speed limit, they shifted between lanes, weaving through traffic, reaching speeds of 102mph.

Less than a mile down the road, oblivious to the deadly street racers hurtling towards her, Jessica Reisinger-Raubenolt, 24, was pushing her 21-month-old daughter Lillia in her pram.

She was visiting from Ohio and heading back to a relative's house after taking Lillia for a sunny morning walk along the waterfront.

Unaware of the speeding cars, Jessica stepped into the road…

Her husband David Raubenolt, then 26, had just driven by, spotting Jessica in shorts and T-shirt, pushing their daughter.

He'd called her, told her he was going to get them some food, and would see her in a few minutes.

Still unaware of the speeding cars, Jessica stepped out into the road at a crossing point…

Barrineau spotted the mum and daughter as he thundered down the right lane. He swerved into the left lane to miss them, straight into the path of the Mustang.

Herrin, unable to see the pedestrians, slammed on his brakes, swerving to the right to avoid his pal's Nissan.

He smashed into Jessica and Lillia, still travelling at 30-40mph. Jessica was thrown into the air, Lillia's pram mangled on impact.

As the emergency services rushed to the scene, Herrin called his mum.

'I've killed someone!' he sobbed.

Meanwhile, Jessica's husband David arrived back to an empty house.

Knowing his wife should be back, he peered down the main road – and spotted police cars, a traffic jam, onlookers.

Sprinting towards the chaos, he saw his daughter's smashed pram in the road.

A stranger drove him to the nearby hospital, where he received terrible news.

Jessica, his wife of two years, had died. And his infant daughter's brain injuries were catastrophic.

Tragically, baby Lillia died the following day. With his whole world shattered, David hoped for justice.

In the aftermath, Barrineau and Herrin both pleaded guilty to two counts of vehicular homicide.

Barrineau, a minor when the crash took place, took a plea deal and was jailed for six years, followed by 15 years probation.

Herrin opted for a judge to decide his fate and, in April

WORDS: ASHLEIGH PAGE. PHOTOS: ALAMY, GETTY/EYEEM

Tampa, scene of the fatal crash

2021, his sentencing hearing began.

David spoke for almost an hour about his wife – how she was endlessly kind-hearted, loved children and would pass out apology notes on planes if their daughter cried.

He wondered aloud about what his daughter would be like as a 4-year-old.

Told how walking into her bedroom, with her empty crib still untouched, made him sweat.

'It is critical for you to understand that you've created everlasting pain and depths of sorrow,' he told Herrin.

Analysis of the Mustang's electronics showed the car had been speeding in the days prior to the crash.

At one point, it had reached a high of 162mph, though there was no evidence to confirm that Herrin was the driver.

Evidence suggested both teens were equally to blame for the fatal street race.

It was argued that it would be unjust for Herrin to receive a longer sentence than Barrineau.

Yet, highlighting Herrin's history of speeding, the judge jailed him for 24 years.

Herrin's eyes widened with shock as his sentence was handed down.

His mother Cheryl had pleaded for leniency, saying Cameron and his brother Tristan were both suffering.

'I'll hear screams at night from both boys. They have anxiety attacks and panic attacks,' she told the court.

But Jessica's mother Pamela Reisinger had no sympathy for the Herrins.

She said, 'They can comfort their children. They can comfort and hug them. I go to a closet and sniff a T-shirt. I go to a baby picture and stroke her cheeks to comfort her.'

In under a minute, the tragedy had ripped apart many lives.

But none more so than the family and friends of young mum Jessica and baby Lillia.

Caption here
Cameron Herrin received a 24-year sentence

'TOO CUTE' FOR PRISON?

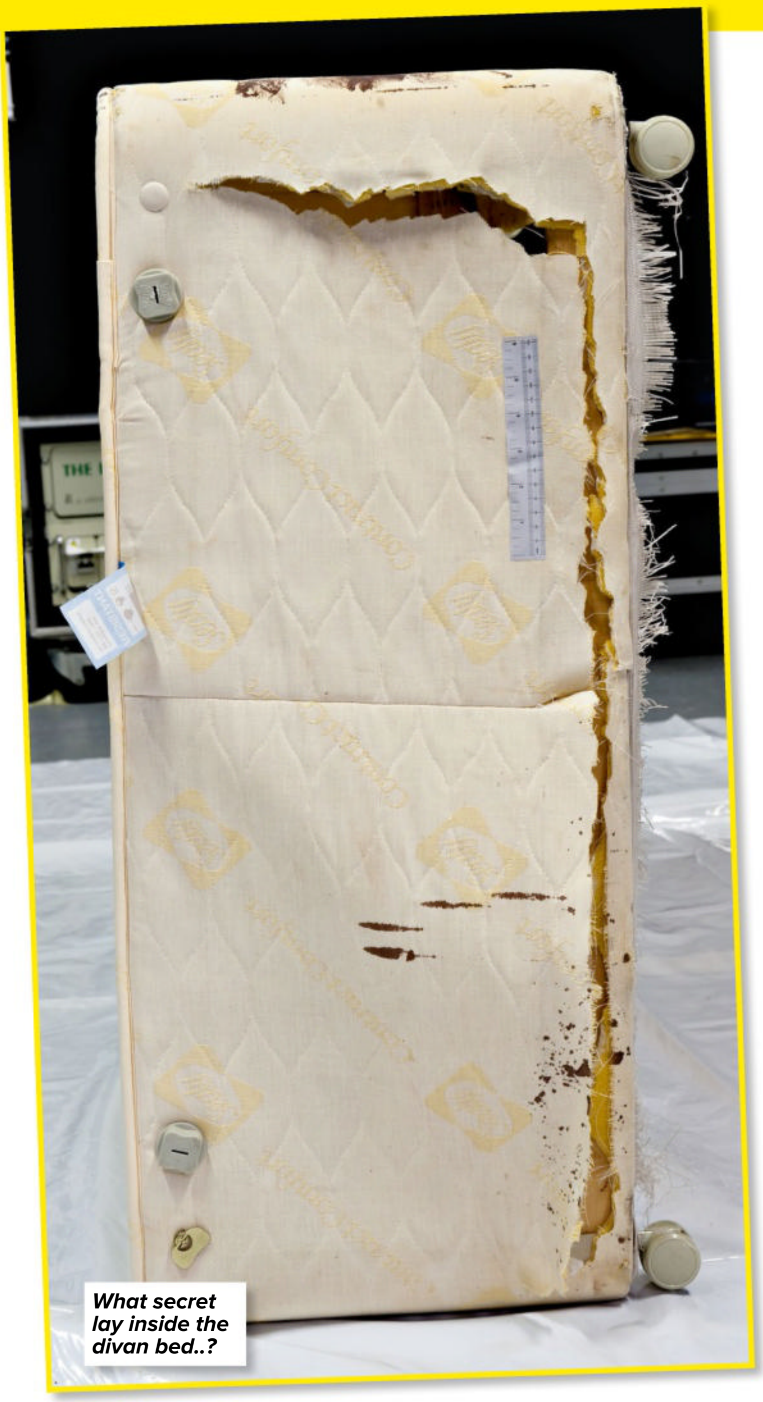
Since his conviction, Cameron Herrin has accumulated a cult following, with social-media users calling for his sentence to be reduced. People – mainly teenage girls – have taken to TikTok, saying he's 'too cute' for prison and deserves a second chance.

Posts tagged #JusticeForCameron have flooded social media, with Herrin's TikTok profile skyrocketing to two million followers. Videos related to Herrin have been viewed 1.7 billion times. Yet his mum Cheryl has hit out at this, saying that the many fans had an 'unhealthy obsession' with her son.

Herrin's mother Cheryl hit out at 'fans'

Undercover evil

Two friends had been brutally murdered and their killer had fled the scene – hadn't he..?



What secret lay inside the divan bed..?

Attila Ban: jealous and infatuated

With its marble staircase and crystal chandeliers, the lobby of the Radisson Edwardian Hotel at Heathrow Airport is grand, to say the least.

Behind the reception desk, a smartly uniformed team are ready to greet guests.

And in August 2011, three of those receptionists were Attila Ban, 32, Tibor Vass, and Alice Adams, both aged 20.

Alice had only joined the company three weeks earlier.

She was saving for the trip to see her aunt get married in Hawaii.

Alice and Tibor had bonded over music. But Attila, who'd developed a crush on his fellow Hungarian Tibor, was jealous of their friendship.

Back in February 2011, Attila had been made employee of the month.

He'd even been offered staff accommodation close to the hotel as a reward for his good work, and he'd convinced Tibor to move in.

Yet, colleagues noticed Attila's unhealthy obsession.

He had regular angry outbursts at Tibor if the young man left him out of social events, and Tibor, who was heterosexual, rebuffed his advances.

Officers searched the flat for the suspect

Then, on 9 August, Tibor, who'd moved to the UK the previous year, had something to celebrate. He'd won a place at university in Budapest.

Attila was utterly devastated that the object of his infatuation would be moving back home.

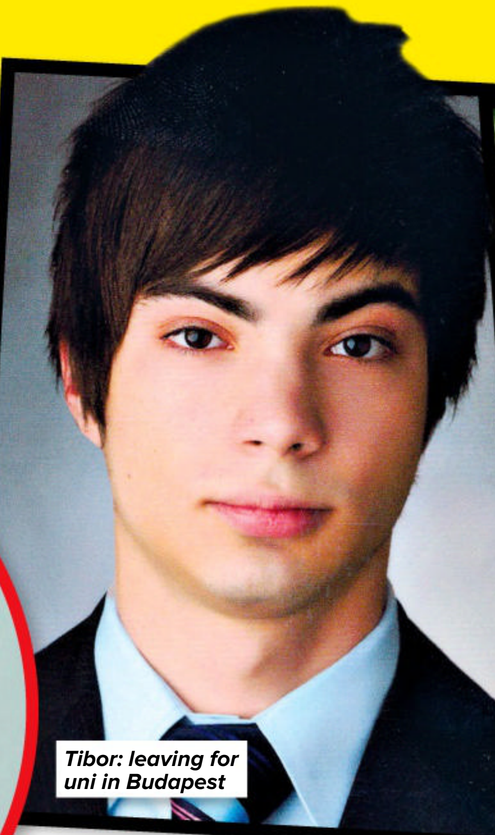
Still, that night, several colleagues – including Tibor and Alice – piled back to Attila's flat for a party.

They played drinking games and some took drugs.

But, eventually, everyone drifted home, leaving Attila, Tibor and Alice.

No-one knows what happened next…

At 3pm the next day, hotel bosses raised the alarm when all three failed



Tibor: leaving for uni in Budapest

Alice: 'her spirit will live on'

to show for their afternoon shift.

The police kicked down the flat door, and found a horrific scene. Tibor lay dead on the bed, Alice on the floor like a 'discarded rag doll', a cushion over her face.

Attila Ban was instantly a suspect. Officers searched the flat, but he was nowhere to be found.

Not wanting to disturb the evidence, nobody moved the single divan bed.

Or looked inside it.

A manhunt was launched and detectives and forensics teams swarmed over the place, looking for clues.

Two days later, an examiner arrived to find the bedroom door, which had previously been open, was shut.

But who'd closed it?

The divan bed had been pushed against the door, and officers had to force entry into the bedroom.

On top of the bed, where Tibor's body had been, was Attila. He was naked, face down, caked in blood – a craft knife sticking out of his arm, another in his buttock.

Had he been hiding inside the divan the entire time?

When he was questioned, Attila pretended to be struck dumb, and tried to communicate in sign language.

But he fooled no-one and was arrested for murder.

In a statement, Alice's devastated family said, 'Alice touched the hearts of everyone she ever met. Her capacity to spread love was unprecedented, and her spirit will live on forever.'

In summer 2012, Attila Ban admitted manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility, but he denied murder.

He went on trial at the Old Bailey.

The jury was told about his obsessive crush on Tibor, and his devastation at learning that he'd be leaving the country.

They heard how popular and fun-loving their co-worker Alice was.

The prosecution said that DNA from both men was found on Alice's breasts, suggesting some sexual contact had taken place.

They claimed that the sight of Tibor and Alice kissing must have tipped Ban over the edge.

Consumed with jealousy he'd launched the drug-fuelled attack, knifing Tibor twice in the heart, brutally stabbing Alice 22 times.

Ban claimed that he'd woken up to find both of his mates dead, and couldn't remember anything of the killings.

Suicidal, he said he'd carried Tibor's body into the bath and got in with him.

He said he'd thrown a hair dryer into the bath – but the appliance carried on working underwater.

He claimed he'd woken up to find his mates dead

'I did not want to die alone,' he told the jury.

But when his plan failed, Ban had placed Tibor's naked body face down on his bed.

Then he'd sliced a hole in the divan. Taking with him a knife, mobile phone and bottle of water, Ban had climbed inside.

He'd cut a peephole to watch events unfold and even updated his Facebook status... *I'd like to wake up from this nightmare.*

Ban had stayed inside the bed for 48 hours, watching the police scour the scene for evidence, and removing his friends' bodies.

He'd even defecated inside his hidey-hole, before finally crawling out and attempting suicide once more.

Attila Ban was found guilty of murder.

Both of the victims' mothers begged him to tell them what had happened.

Alice's mother Sarah Adams said, 'The most difficult thing to cope with is not knowing exactly what happened to my lovely Alice that night.

'Horrific as it would be to hear, the truth would be preferable to the constant struggle going on in my mind of trying to figure out the sequence of events leading up to Alice's murder.'

Rozalia Vass said she had been comforted to know Tibor had found such a good friend in Ban in London.

'He promised me personally to look after my son and not to let anything happen to him. I trusted him and regarded him as my own child,' she said.

The crime has been the subject of documentaries, most recently Sky's *Killer Colleagues.*

Judge Gerald Gordon jailed Attila Ban for life, to serve a minimum of 26 years.

The judge said, 'Exactly what happened will probably never be known.

'That creates an even greater burden for the two grieving families.'

WORDS: DONNA SMILEY. PHOTOS: PA IMAGES, SHUTTERSTOCK

Stinking rich

Money can get you far in life...until you get caught

William 'Rick' Singer was a man who made things happen. His speciality? Getting privileged kids into universities they couldn't qualify for off their own bat.

Usually at the request of their wealthy parents.

As his reputation grew, even Hollywood celebrities enlisted Singer's services to bribe exam administrators into letting someone else sit university entrance exams in place of their offspring – or to correct their kids' answers later.

Parents would also pay bribes to university sports coaches via Singer. Their teenagers would be falsely tagged as star athletes to win sports scholarships.

Meanwhile, Singer set up a charitable organisation, the tax-exempt Key Worldwide Foundation. Loaded parents made 'donations', and the cash was used for bribes.

Parents paid $15,000 to $75,000 (£11k to £55k) per test to take part in the scheme and gain places at Stanford, Yale, Georgetown, and the Universities of Southern California, California and Texas.

One of the first to become suspicious back in 2017 was a private-school counsellor who noticed one of the students had been designated as a water-polo recruit to get into the University of Southern California, even though there was no water-polo team at the school.

The student had even posed for pictures in a pool, to support his application.

An investigation was launched and Singer's phones tapped. During one 2018 conversation with a prospective client, he revealed all his secrets.

'We help the wealthiest families in the US get their kids into school,' he said. 'They want guarantees... They don't want to be messing around.'

Some students even faked learning disabilities

The deeper detectives probed, the more elaborate the scheme proved.

Singer had ordered parents to digitally place their kids' heads onto athletes' photos, to support their applications.

The 'water-polo athlete' had even been directed to retake photos, as the first batch weren't convincing enough.

The scam had started in 2011. Most students were unaware their parents had paid Singer to get them into university via the side door.

In 2017, one parent even paid $1.2m (£880k) to get their daughter into Yale, including a $400,000 (£300k) bribe for the women's football coach to designate their girl a gifted player.

The coach was well aware the girl had never played competitive footy.

Some students, however, were in on the scam, and even faked learning disabilities to take their exams at test centres where Singer had bribed staff.

But the FBI were hot on Singer's trail, with 200 agents assigned to Operation Varsity Blues.

In September 2018, Singer was arrested, charged with racketeering conspiracy and money laundering conspiracy, conspiracy to defraud the United States, and obstruction of justice.

To get less jail time, Singer agreed to help the FBI bring down his co-conspirators.

He wore a wire during phone calls and visits to past and present clients. Under the guise of an 'audit' of his foundation, he got them to confirm that they were aware their donations were phoney.

In total, 50 people – among them exam administrators, university coaches and nearly three dozen parents – were charged in the largest admissions scam ever.

In March 2019, Rick Singer, then 58, admitted all charges against him. The court heard clients paid him $25 million (£18m) between 2011 and 2018.

'I am absolutely responsible for it. I put everything in place. I put all the people in place and made the payments directly,' he told the judge.

One of the big names caught up in the scheme was *Desperate Housewives* actor Felicity Huffman, who, in 2017, paid $15,000 (£11k) to enable her unknowing daughter Sophia, then 18,

WORDS: DONNA SMILEY. PHOTOS: ALAMY

Singer turned FBI informant

Desperate? Felicity Huffman with her husband after sentencing

to take her university entrance exams at a test centre designated by Singer.

There, Sophia's answers were corrected to ensure she scored highly.

In September 2019, flanked by actor hubby William H Macy, Huffman pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit mail fraud and honest services mail fraud.

She spoke of her 'regret', her 'shame' and her concern that her daughter's low maths scores could ruin her university dreams.

'I want to apologise to the students who work hard every day to get into college, and to their parents who make tremendous sacrifices to support their children and do so honestly,' she said.

Huffman added that the worst part was betraying her daughter, who'd had no idea.

'She said, "Why didn't you believe in me, Mum? Why didn't you think I can do it on my own?" I can only say I'm sorry, Sophia. I was so stupid and I was so wrong.'

The actor was jailed for 14 days, ordered to serve 250 hours of community service and fined $30k (£22k).

Another actor, Lori Loughlin, from TV comedy *Full House*, and her fashion-designer husband Mossimo Giannulli had paid $500k (£365k) to secure their daughters' uni places as fake athletes.

Giannulli, who admitted conspiracy to commit wire and mail fraud, and honest services wire and mail fraud, was jailed for five months. Loughlin got two months for conspiracy to commit wire and mail fraud.

The real victims are the hard-working students

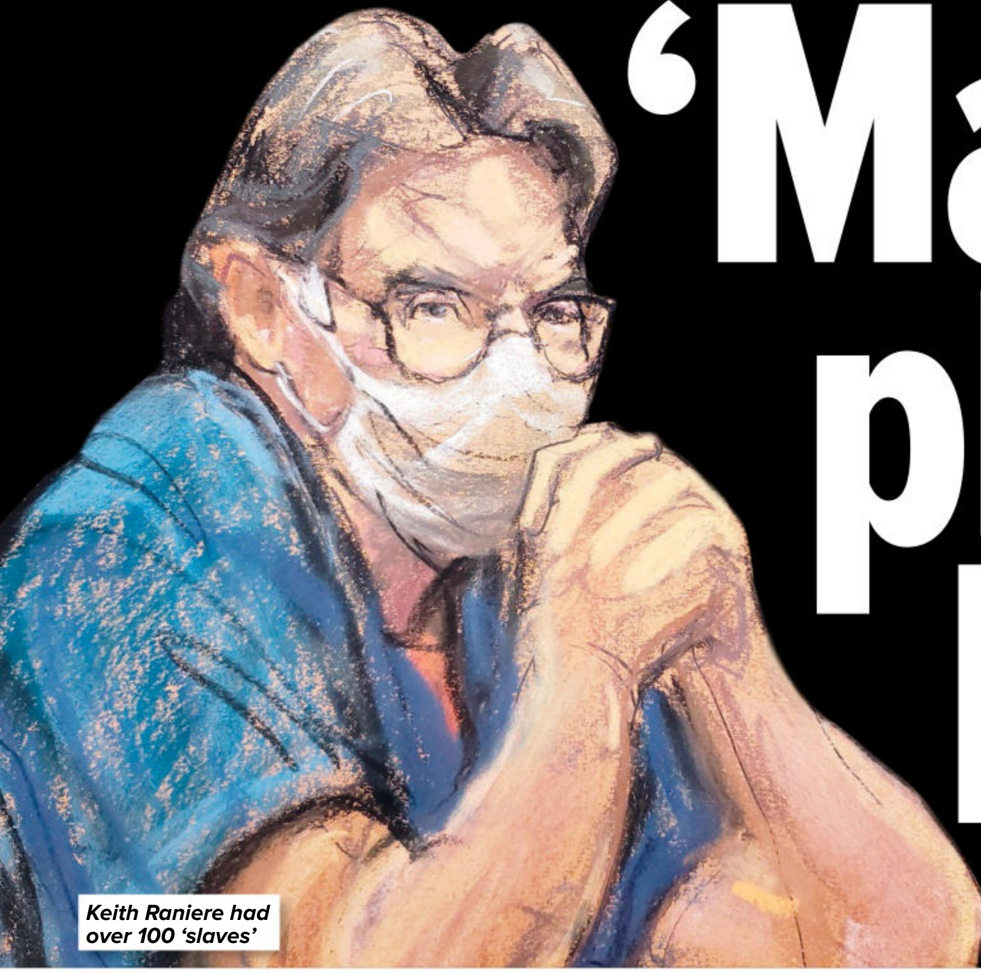
But the real victims are the hard-working students potentially cheated out of their places at university.

Shockingly, Singer's punishment, doled out in January 2023, was just 3 and a half years of jail time, as well as forfeiture of $10 million (£8 million).

Full House actor Lori Loughlin was also jailed

‘Master
please
bran

How did this man draw women into a sordid



Keith Raniere had over 100 ‘slaves’

Taking a deep breath, Sarah Edmondson tried to block out that she was lying naked on a massage table.

Being held down by three other women.

She couldn’t believe what was about to happen behind the doors of a chic house in leafy upstate New York.

But she was ready.

‘Master, brand me. It would be an honour,’ she said.

As the cauterising iron seared seven white-hot lines into the skin just below her hip, Sarah reminded herself that the agony was the last step in her initiation.

It was March 2017 and she was about to join a sisterhood called DOS, a highly secret cult within the elite marketing scheme called Nxivm (pronounced ‘nexium’).

It claimed to empower women by teaching them self-discipline and enlightenment.

Just like the three women pinning her down, now Sarah, too, would be part of this exclusive sect.

Finally, at 39, after her TV acting career had stalled, Sarah was taking control of her destiny.

Still, the branding was pure agony for the one-time *Stargate SG-1* actress.

‘I wept the whole time,’ Sarah said later.

And what she hadn’t been told was that the brand was actually the initials of the group’s male co-founder.

Self-help ‘guru’ Keith Raniere.

He and ex-nurse Nancy Salzman had founded Nxivm in the 1990s.

Offered expensive Executive Success Programs to the elite.

There were thousands of members, both male and female, but only a select few women were hand-picked to join DOS.

Sarah was the latest recruit, oblivious to the many others whose mission was solely to pleasure Raniere.

For Sarah, the grooming process had been gradual.

She’d been introduced to Nxivm years earlier by a film-maker friend.

Other high-profile actresses were already members, including *Smallville* actress Allison Mack.

Sarah’s agony was the last step in her initiation

Sarah thought joining would be good for her career.

After shelling out thousands to attend Nxivm self-help seminars, Sarah found the powerful ideology helped her to land better acting roles.

She even met her husband Anthony Ames through the organisation and became close friends with Salzman’s daughter Lauren.

Little by little, Sarah’s life was shaped by Nxivm.

Her success and devotion hadn’t gone unnoticed by Salzman and Raniere.

Sarah was Keith’s type – brunette, slim and stylish.

So Lauren was tasked with recruiting Sarah into DOS.

Told her it was ‘top secret’.

And that to learn more, Sarah had to provide ‘collateral’ – damaging or humiliating information to make sure that she kept the secret.

The ‘collateral’ Sarah handed over was a naked photo and a letter detailing past indiscretions.

It sounded extreme.

But Sarah was intrigued, and desperate to rise to the next level.

To experience the empowerment that other members seemed to enjoy.

They were all attractive and well-educated women.

Yet, soon after Sarah’s branding ceremony, she began to realise what she’d really signed up for.

She discovered members of DOS were made to survive on 500 calories a

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a stream of smart secret sisterhood?

Actress Sarah Edmondson escaped the sect’s clutches

Allison Mack helped recruit other women

Nxivm co-founder Nancy Salzman

Daughter, Lauren Salzman

day.

Then she found out they were expected to have sex with Raniere.

And if they refused?

He’d release their intimate confessions and naked photos.

Sexual bribery.

Sarah also figured out the lines burnt into her hip spelt Raniere’s initials.

The penny dropped.

She’d been duped into a sex cult designed only to fulfil the perverse fantasies of Keith Raniere.

She was devastated and afraid.

When Sarah’s husband discovered the branding, he helped her escape and they went to the FBI.

Other members had also complained about Nxivm’s moneymaking schemes, and DOS’ disturbing inner practices.

An investigation was launched and Raniere, Salzman and Allison Mack were arrested.

Raniere was charged with seven counts, including racketeering, sex trafficking and child pornography possession.

He pleaded not guilty.

But at his New York trial in May 2019, the full extent of the sordid abuse and brainwashing within DOS was exposed.

DOS was said to stand for *dominus obsequious sororium* – roughly translated as ‘master over slave women’.

It was claimed the leader had more than 100 ‘slaves’, including one as young as 15.

He used humiliation to break down his followers

Prosecution lawyer Tanya Hajjar described Raniere as a ‘predator who preyed on young women’.

Who used shame and humiliation to break down his followers.

Took photos of their genitals for his collection.

Several former DOS slaves testified. Said that they were whipped if they disobeyed.

Jurors were shown sex-toy receipts for thousands of dollars, ordered by a member of Raniere’s inner circle.

One included a full-size jail cell for his dedicated sex dungeon.

Mack collected the slaves’ ‘collateral’. The damning material to use against members should they try to escape.

Raniere denied DOS was a cult, arguing it was all consensual.

Defence lawyer Marc Agnifilo said, ‘There’s been no shortage of intimate partners for Keith Raniere pre-DOS. He’s had them his whole life. This is just his lifestyle.’

Yet Raniere was convicted and sentenced to 120 years in prison – he’d die behind bars.

In June 2021, Allison Mack, then 39, was jailed for three years after admitting racketeering and conspiracy for her role in recruiting women.

Nancy Salzman, then 67, was sentenced to three and a half years after admitting racketeering.

Lauren Salzman, then 44, admitted racketeering and conspiracy, but was sentenced to five years probation after testifying against Raniere.

Some closure for the victims of DOS and Raniere’s perversions.

Yet the cruel brand seared on their skin is a brutal reminder of everything they suffered at the hands of Nxivm’s ‘masters’.

WORDS: BETHAN KING. PHOTOS: ALAMY, GETTY

TERROR TAXI

Driven by the Devil

What made a seemingly happy, hard-working family man go berserk?

The Dalton house was a happy one.

Dad Jason was a good husband to Carole and father to his two kids.

A helpful neighbour, he was content with his job as an insurance loss adjuster in Kalamazoo, Michigan, US.

In February 2016, he'd just started moonlighting as an Uber driver to earn extra cash to take his family to Disney World.

Police frantically followed the trail of blood

Carole noticed he seemed a little down.

'I'm just tired,' he promised.

The extra hours driving were taking their toll.

On 20 February, Jason, then 45, kissed Carole, their son,15, and daughter, 10, goodbye.

And while they went out, he walked the family's German shepherd Mia, before going to a gun shop with his mate.

Nothing unusual.

Guns were Jason's hobby, he was a regular customer.

He was smiling and joking around as he bought a military-style jacket, and when he left, he gave the manager a one-armed hug.

Told him to have a good day.

'I'm going to have a nap, then do some work,' he told his mate, dropping him off.

Later that afternoon, Jason put Mia in the back of his silver Chevy Equinox and logged into the Uber app.

His first customer refused to get in when she saw Mia.

But just after 4pm, Jason picked up Matt Mellen.

Matt was heading to a friend's and got into the front passenger seat.

Made small talk.

During the journey, Jason's son called.

Asked his dad if he wanted them to pick up some food.

Only, after hanging up, Jason became unhinged.

Slammed his foot on the accelerator, weaving through traffic as Matt clung on for dear life.

Clipped another vehicle.

'You just hit that car!' Matt cried.

'I didn't hit anything,' Jason replied, eerily calm.

In the back, Mia got on the floor and hid as Jason sped through red lights.

Matt pleaded to be let out.

Eventually, on a quiet stretch, Jason slammed on the brakes and Matt leapt out, called police.

Meanwhile, Jason sped home, grabbed a loaded semi-automatic pistol.

Put on a bulletproof vest.

After accepting another Uber fare, he spotted Tiana Carruthers, 25, taking five young children, including her daughter, to a playground.

Jason rolled down his window, asked if she was his passenger.

'No,' Tiana replied.

Jason drove off, before turning around and aiming his gun through the window.

'Run,' screamed Tiana to the kids.

But Tiana was shot four times.

She fell to the ground, where she played dead.

Jason sped off, clipping another car.

Stopping at his parents' home nearby, he switched his damaged Chevy for their black one.

Carole was there.

She said that her husband was acting oddly.

He told her another taxi driver had shot at him, and that she might see him on the news.

Jason switched guns.

But, for the next few hours, he picked up Uber passengers like nothing had happened.

Even sang along to

WORDS: DONNA SMILEY. PHOTOS: GETTY, SHUTTERSTOCK

Gunned down: Richard Smith and his son Tyler

Eerily calm: killer Jason Dalton

Innocent victims: Mary Jo Nye...

...and Barbara Hawthorne

the radio.

Around 10pm Jason Dalton pulled into a closed car dealership, where father and son Richard, 53, and Tyler Smith, 17, were looking at a pick-up truck.

Jason climbed out, walked over and asked what vehicle they were looking at.

But as they answered, Jason pulled out his gun.

'What are you doing?' they cried, flinging their hands in the air.

Jason shot them dead.

Fifteen minutes later, Jason drove to a restaurant car park, where he spotted a group of women in a car.

Mary Lou Nye, 62, Mary Jo Nye, 60, Dorothy Brown, 74, and Barbara Hawthorne, 68, were shot dead.

Abigail Kopf, 14, was shot in the head, but miraculously survived – after a doctor had called time of death.

Police were frantically following the trail of blood.

Meanwhile, Jason Dalton resumed picking up fares.

One even asked if he was the shooter, to which he told him 'no'.

At 12.37am, Jason was finally pulled over by police.

He didn't resist arrest.

He showed no emotion under interrogation, voice monotone.

'He was just sitting there going through the motions,' detective Bill Moorian said.

'I never had anybody like that before.'

Eventually, Jason Dalton began to explain.

Bizarrely, he blamed the Uber app, claiming it'd taken over his body.

Had 'guided' him to kill.

The car dealership where Dalton opened fire
SEELYE
4102

'I know you guys are going to have a hard time believing this,' he said, 'but it literally took over my mind and body.

'I just tapped it and then there was like a devil head that popped up.
It was some sort of like horned, horned head, like a cow head or something.

'I pressed that button and that's where all the problems went after that.'

Dalton claimed the app would start off red, then switch to black.

'When it's in that black mode, it literally has control of you,' he said.

He explained the app then gave him assignments he had to complete.

Dalton also told investigators that, prior to the shootings, he'd not been sleeping, and that wasn't normal for him.

But he claimed nothing triggered the shootings.

Three years on, in January 2019, Jason Dalton appeared in court.

He pleaded guilty to six counts of first-degree premeditated murder and two counts of assault with intent to commit murder.

He was sentenced to life without parole.

Carole divorced Jason, and moved away with the kids.

But, to this day, his family and friends remain baffled by his actions.

They say there were no warning signs.

And yet, as well murdering and injuring, in one night Jason Dalton devastated countless lives, including those of the people he loved.

‘NO SOUL’

Blood lust

He said his sickening crimes made him feel ‘like a god’

Jennifer Wendorf, 17, was a pretty and popular teenager.

A cheerleader at her school in Eustis, Florida, she had everything to look forward to.

‘Life was perfect,’ she said. ‘Before the murders.’

She had a uni scholarship, great friends and a decent part-time job.

‘My life was so full. I had love, I had it all – until I had nothing,’ she said.

Because on 25 November 1996, she came home from her part-time supermarket job to a horrifying and gruesome discovery.

Walking up the drive, she noticed the family’s Ford Explorer wasn’t there.

She assumed her parents were out.

But inside, she found the bludgeoned body of her beloved dad Richard, 49, on their blood-soaked sofa.

Next, she found the broken body of her mum Ruth, 54.

The scene was a bloodbath, with some things Jennifer saw too upsetting to repeat.

Jennifer’s younger sister Heather, then 15, was nowhere to be found.

Terrified and shocked, Jennifer called the police.

‘My mother and father have just been killed,’ she sobbed on the phone.

‘My sister’s gone. She should be here. She’s only 15 and she’s gone.’

Richard and Ruth’s bodies had a burn marks in the shape of a V, leading the police to immediately suspect a youth named Rod Ferrell, then 16.

At 18, he became the youngest person on Death Row

A troubled teen, he’d had a chaotic and dysfunctional upbringing by his mum Sondra, then 35, a sex worker and exotic dancer.

Ferrell suffered mental-health problems, heard voices. He took drugs, had been expelled from school.

Sondra had dabbled in vampirism – sparking a fixation in her son with the undead, blood-drinking creatures of folklore.

He believed he was an immortal 500-year-old vampire called Vesago.

He started dressing in black, telling friends he had no soul.

In 1995, Ferrell had moved with his mother from Florida to Kentucky, where he began recruiting followers into his Vampire Clan.

They hung out in the local cemetery at night, drank each other’s blood in a ‘crossing-over’ ritual.

One night, Ferrell killed a kitten, throwing it against a tree and snapping its spine.

In October 1996, he broke into an animal shelter and slaughtered two puppies.

Meanwhile, he’d stayed in touch with his old school friend in Florida – Heather Wendorf…

Heather was very different from her older sister Jennifer.

The ‘artist’ of the family, Heather dyed her hair, liked alternative fashion and drew harrowing pictures about death.

She shared Ferrell’s dark obsession with vampires.

So when detectives found those ritualistic burnt Vs – for vampire – on Richard and Ruth’s bodies, they launched a hunt for Ferrell and his Kentucky ‘clan’ – Ferrell’s girlfriend Charity Keesee, then 16, Howard Scott Anderson, 16, and Dana Cooper, 19. And Heather Wendorf.

Four days later, the clan was traced to a hotel in Louisiana and arrested.

Ferrell denied the murders, spinning several delusional stories.

He claimed that he suffered blackouts, multiple

Aged just 15, Heather Wendorf

Big sister Jennifer found their parents

'Vampire' Ferrell in court

Girlfriend Charity Keesee

personalities, blamed a rival vampire cult.

Then, in January 1997, Heather was freed.

Investigators agreed she'd been unaware of her parents' murders when she ran off with the gang.

She'd even left her family a goodbye note saying, *I love you all so very much.*

In February 1998, just as his trial was opening, Ferrell pleaded guilty to murder.

In court, it was revealed how Ferrell, Keesee, Anderson and Cooper had driven from Kentucky to Florida to pick up Heather.

They all planned to flee to New Orleans, to start a commune for their cult.

Heather had driven off with the girls to say goodbye to her boyfriend, leaving Ferrell and Anderson outside the Wendorf home.

The boys then sneaked in through the unlocked garage, where Ferrell armed himself with a crowbar.

Finding Heather's dad sleeping on the sofa, he pounced, smashing his ribs and skull as he bludgeoned him repeatedly.

When Ruth, who'd been showering, walked in, she instinctively threw a coffee at Ferrell.

Ferrell's flesh and blood was later found under her fingernails, suggesting she'd fought back.

Shocking evidence...

But Ferrell killed her, too, leaving his bloody boot prints on the kitchen floor.

After, Ferrell and Anderson stole a credit card, jewellery and the family's car, picking up the three girls as they fled, including the unsuspecting Heather.

In several taped confessions, Ferrell admitted killing made him 'feel like a god for a split second'.

'It was a rush,' he said.

Sentenced to death by electric chair, aged 18, he became the youngest person on Death Row in the US.

Anderson later pleaded guilty to being a principal to first-degree murder. His life sentence was eventually reduced to 40 years.

Keesee and Cooper were both convicted of two counts of third-degree murder and sentenced to 10 and 17 years respectively. Both have since been released.

In November 2000, Ferrell's death sentence was reduced to life without parole, due to his age at the time of the killings.

In April 2020, Ferrell, then 40, tried to get his sentence reduced further.

While not much is known about Heather Wendorf these days, her older sister Jennifer spoke at the hearing.

She described how the pain of discovering her murdered parents that fateful day would 'never go away'.

She begged for Ferrell to remain behind bars.

The judge maintained that Ferrell was 'irreparably corrupt' and would die behind bars.

'If he ever gets out, I'll be destroyed,' Jennifer said – and now, at least, that time will never come.

To this day, Ferrell has never revealed what led to his unquenchable blood lust.

WORDS: FRANCES LEATE. PHOTOS: ALAMY, ASSOCIATED PRESS, TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE VIA GETTY

EVIL PREDATOR

'Blackest of deeds'

'Twas the night before Christmas, and a sadistic killer had a twisted tale to tell...

Moore owned a cinema chain

When solicitor Dylan Rhys Jones was woken by a phone call in the early hours of Christmas Eve 1995, dread filled him.

It was the local police.

The man he was representing, cinema-chain owner Peter Moore, then 49, was being held at Llandudno police station.

Accused of murdering four men.

For two days, Moore had claimed it was simply mistaken identity. But now, apparently, he wanted to tell them something.

And minutes after Jones arrived that cold December morning, he and several detectives were listening to a most disturbing confession.

One that not only put the solicitor off his Christmas dinner, but left him needing counselling – and eventually resigning from his profession.

Moore, a respected local businessman, told the stunned Jones and two detectives that he'd been brutally attacking lone men in North Wales – for 20 years.

'When driving around, I would sometimes notice someone walking along the road late at night and I would stop and attack them.

'I would assault them with a police truncheon and strike them on the body and their heads many times,' he said, his voice cold and clinical.

He described how he'd dress as a policeman or a Nazi 'just to scare them'.

Moore confessed to attacking at least 17 men for sexual kicks.

What's more, in the last months, his violence had escalated to murder.

First, in September 1995, he'd stabbed retired railway worker Henry Roberts, 56, 27 times with a combat knife he'd bought for £25.

Roberts had been found 'riddled' with stab wounds outside his isolated cottage in Holyhead.

Moore had picked up his second victim – Edward Carthy, 28 – one October night in a gay bar in Liverpool.

Moore confessed to attacking men for sexual kicks

He'd offered Carthy a lift home. But, sensing danger, Carthy had tried to leap out of Moore's van.

'I think he got a bit frightened actually,' Moore confessed.

Moore had overpowered Edward and taken him to a remote spot in Clocaenog Forest. He'd plunged a knife into his body before ditching him in the undergrowth.

Then, in November 1995, Moore had stabbed traffic manager Keith Randles, 49, in his caravan at a roadside construction compound along the A5 in Anglesey.

'He asked me why I was killing him as I stabbed him, and I said that it was for fun,' Moore callously shrugged.

'He fell to the floor. I just thought it was a job well done, and left and returned to my van,' he added.

Then, just a week before Christmas, Moore had spotted Anthony Davies, 40, on a beach near Colwyn Bay.

Moore had stabbed the married father of two four times and left him to die.

'I don't feel any remorse whatsoever for what I've done,' smirked Moore.

He said that the murders were a stress reliever.

However, Moore had cut himself stabbing Anthony Davies. Blood found on the beach had matched Moore's DNA and he'd been arrested days later, on 22 December.

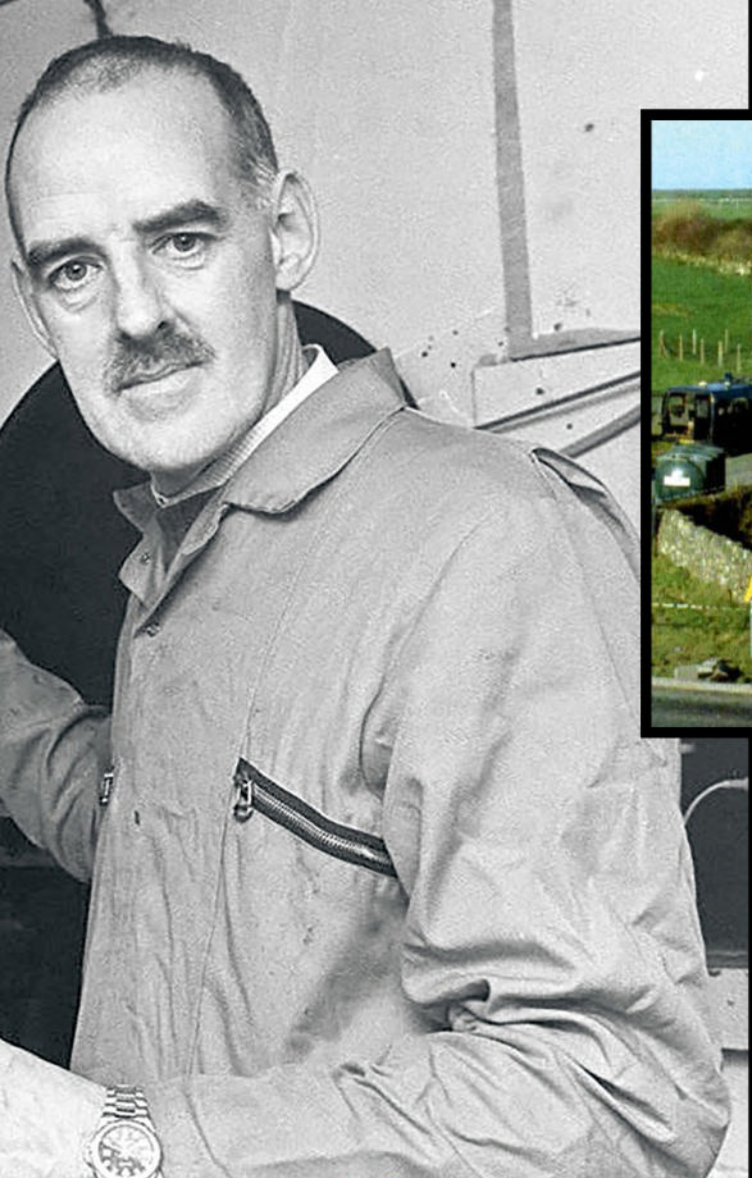
Now, after two days of denial, Moore gloated about his actions in the disturbing Christmas Eve confession.

'It was easy. Just like a knife through butter,' he said.

Dylan Jones later said it was a night he could never forget.

'It was like watching a cold-blooded lizard move towards its prey... calculating every move... describing the bare essentials of the deed,' he said.

But, after so much chilling detail, just hours later, Moore retracted his confession and claimed he'd made it up to protect the



Roadworks where Keith Randles' body was found

real murderer – his lover, a man called Jason.

The police found no evidence that Jason existed. But they did find victims' belongings – a VCR and mobile phone – in Moore's house and garden pond.

Plus a knife with traces of their blood.

A police helmet, two German military caps and black boots plus a truncheon, handcuffs and a police uniform, were in a bedroom cupboard.

At his trial at Mold Crown Court in November 1996, Moore pleaded not guilty. He still maintained his mystery lover was the killer.

But the evidence against Peter Moore was overwhelming.

Several murder scenes were on the route home from one of his cinemas.

Locally, he'd become known as the 'man in black' for his dark clothes.

At first worn to merge into the background while working as a cinema operator – later, so he'd be unseen at night when he'd hunted his prey.

Prosecution lawyer Alex Carlile QC called him a violent, predatory sadist.

'He was the man in black, with black clothes, black thoughts, and the blackest of deeds,' he said.

It was revealed Moore was a longed-for only child. Doted on by his mum Edith, who called him her 'miracle child'.

And it was her death in May 1994 that Carlile said could've pushed Moore over the edge, turning him from attacker to serial killer.

A jury quickly saw Moore for who he was – a predator who butchered his victims for fun, and he was found guilty.

The judge said the killer should never be freed

Jailing him for life, the judge recommended Moore should never be freed.

'I consider you as dangerous a man as it is possible to find,' he said.

Dylan Jones' book about Moore, *The Man in Black*, was published last year.

Moore initially agreed to cooperate in the writing of it, before withdrawing Dylan Jones' visiting order and sending him a Christmas card.

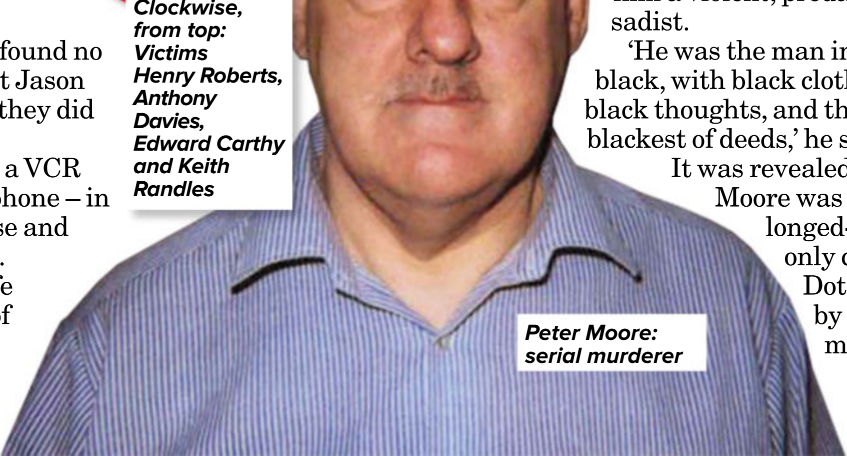
'He seems to be trying to manipulate people and circumstances, even after 24 years in prison,' Jones said.

Moore has unsuccessfully appealed his whole-life tariff at the European Court of Human Rights.

He remains in Wakefield Prison – a Category A institution aptly nicknamed Monster Mansion.

● ***The Man in Black – Peter Moore: Wales' Worst Serial Killer* by Dylan Jones (£9.99, Y Lolfa).**

Clockwise, from top: Victims Henry Roberts, Anthony Davies, Edward Carthy and Keith Randles


Peter Moore: serial murderer

WORDS: FRANCES LEATE. PHOTOS: MIRRORPIX

SOLD TO HER DEATH

Children for sale...

A teenager missing at Christmas met the worst possible fate

Joseph Hazley: pimped victims

Desiree Robinson: bubbly and smart

As the lights twinkled, Christmas filled the air.

It was December 2016, and families were gathering together to celebrate.

But one family could not muster any festive joy.

Weeks earlier, 16-year-old Desiree Robinson had gone missing.

She'd been staying with her grandparents, on the south side of Chicago.

They'd warned her the streets were dangerous. That she needed to watch out for herself.

But on 29 November, she'd gone out with friends and hadn't come home.

Her grandfather Dennis Treadwell had filed a missing person's report.

That December, after not hearing from her, Desiree's friend Tobijah Burks, then 18, reached out on Facebook

Asked if anything was wrong.

Everything, came the reply. *I'm in a bad situation,* she added.

Shockingly, Desiree claimed she was being 'pimped' by a man holding her against her will.

I came here for a party, she said.

He told me he was going to take me home, but now he won't let me leave, she continued.

She didn't have any money, and her bus pass didn't work.

It was the last anyone heard from Desiree.

Nine days later, she was dead.

On the morning of Christmas Eve, her naked body was found lying in a garage.

She'd been beaten, strangled, her throat slit.

Desiree's mother, Yvonne Ambrose, was devastated.

She'd hoped to be reunited with her daughter for Christmas.

Now, she'd never see her again.

On 27 December, a 32-year-old man was charged with Desiree's murder, after admitting killing the teenager.

He claimed he had met her via a classified-ads website, called backpage.com, where Desiree was being advertised as a prostitute.

He'd invited her to a party, before leaving to have sex with her in his truck.

The following morning, on Christmas Eve, he'd met her for a second time.

The pair had entered a nearby garage.

But he couldn't afford to pay.

She'd refused when he tried to negotiate a free 15 minutes, and the meeting had turned violent.

He'd punched her in the face, strangling her as she called for help.

Then slit her throat.

'I am just numb,' Yvonne said after she had to identify Desiree's body.

She couldn't understand how her daughter had met such a grisly fate.

Desiree was bubbly and smart, excelled on the sports field, played drums in a band and dreamt of becoming a doctor.

What had led her to prostitution?

The answers lay in a murky underworld

The answer lay in the murky underworld of backpage.com.

An investigation was launched.

Authorities dubbed it an online brothel, where dating ads were a guise for prostitutes: 'new girl in town' was code for teenager.

But Desiree hadn't been a willing participant.

In March 2019, Joseph Hazley, then 35,

Former backpage.com CEO Carl Ferrer (left), and co-founders James Larkin and Michael Lacey

stood trial charged with sex trafficking.

Accused of advertising Desiree and two other victims for sex.

'He asked others to find him girls who he could convince to have sex for money,' said prosecuting lawyer Kelly Greening.

Witness Charles McFee, then 26, had already pleaded guilty to sex-trafficking conspiracy and been jailed for seven years.

He testified to having brought Desiree to Hazley in December 2016, in exchange for a $250 (£180) finder's fee.

Hazley had then arranged multiple meetings for her to engage in prostitution.

The court heard how Hazley had driven Desiree to an appointment with a customer at the party on 23 December, and to meet with the same man the following morning, on Christmas Eve.

Hazley had waited outside in the car. When Desiree hadn't emerged, he'd found her dead.

Hazley was found guilty of six counts of sex trafficking.

Sentencing him to 32 years, judge Sharon Johnson Coleman said Desiree's death was a factor, and she wanted to deter others from trafficking underage girls.

Charles McFee brought Desiree to Hazley

'To say that it was horrific is an understatement,' Judge Coleman said.

Speaking at the hearing, Yvonne paid tribute to her daughter.

'Joseph Hazley sold my baby. My baby! As if she was a piece of clothing!' she cried.

'Desiree did not deserve this,' she added.

And she swore Hazley's conviction would not be the end of the matter.

'Everyone will finally be held accountable for their actions in my daughter's death.'

But pimps and killers were not the only ones responsible for the murky world of online prostitution.

Backpage.com had to answer, too.

Yvonne's campaigning took her to the White House, where a new law making websites criminally liable for hosting sex-trafficking ads was signed by then-president Donald Trump.

'I will live with the heavy pain of losing my sweet daughter every single day, for the rest of my life,' Yvonne said.

Authorities seized the backpage.com website.

Its CEO, Carl Ferrer, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to facilitate prostitution and three counts of money laundering.

As part of his plea, Ferrer agreed to cooperate with an investigation against company founders Michael Lacey and James Larkin.

Also charged with prostitution facilitation and money laundering, the pair are accused of knowingly selling ads for sex on the site, some involving children.

Authorities say backpage.com had generated $500 million (around £3.6 million) in prostitution-related revenue from 2004 until April 2018, when it was shut down.

In November 2023, a jury found Lacey guilty of money laundering. Two other execs were convicted on charges that included money laundering and conspiracy to violate the Travel Act, a federal law barring the use of interstate commerce to facilitate prostitution.

Despite initially confessing to the crime, Desiree's murderer is yet to face trial.

But Yvonne Ambrose has sworn to keep fighting, and to shine a light on the seedy truth of the online sex market.

Mum Yvonne took her fight to the White House

WORDS: FRANCESCA WOODSTOCK. PHOTOS: COOK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, ALAMY

TAINTED DREAMS

Power in numbers

As more victims came forward, the sordid truth about the gymnasts' doctor could no longer be hidden

After a lifetime of missed family events, missed holidays, and intense, vigorous training, Maggie Nichols, then 18, had almost reached her goal.

It was July 2016, and she was hoping to become an Olympic gymnast.

She'd been competing nationally since she was 13 years old, winning silver and bronze medals.

Now she'd just finished her routine for the Olympic trials in California.

But, when the judges announced who would be joining Team USA, Maggie's name wasn't called.

Her dad John stood on the sidelines, angry and heartbroken.

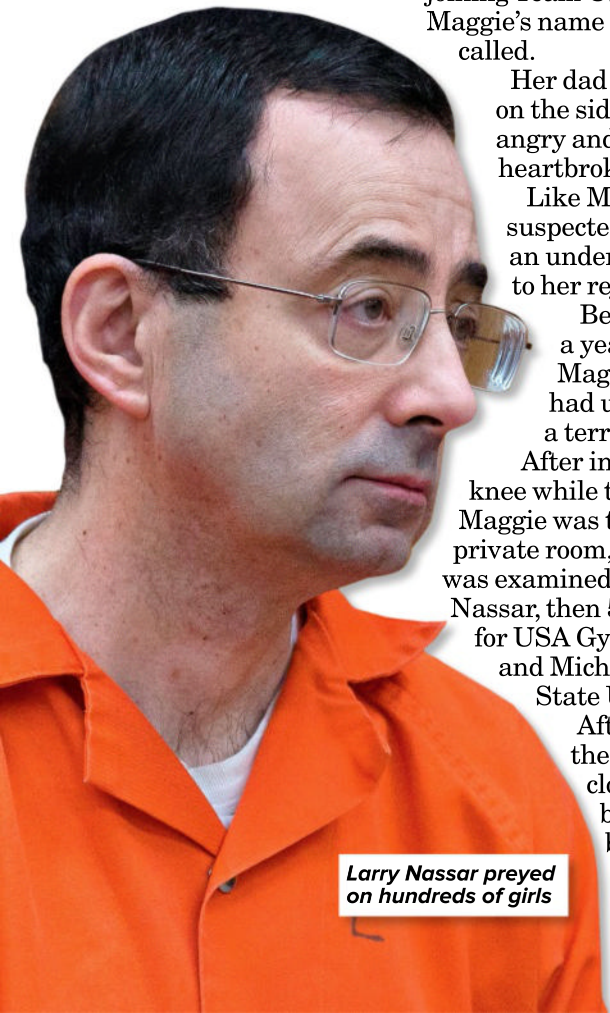
Like Maggie, he suspected there was an underlying factor to her rejection.

Because, just a year before, Maggie's family had uncovered a terrible secret.

After injuring her knee while training, Maggie was taken into a private room, where she was examined by Larry Nassar, then 52, a doctor for USA Gymnastics and Michigan State University.

After shutting the door and closing the blinds, he began to examine her.

Maggie was an Olympic hopeful



Larry Nassar preyed on hundreds of girls

Only, Maggie felt something was off.

'He didn't use gloves, and he told me that there was a nerve "down there". Does he do the same to you?' Maggie asked a fellow gymnast afterwards.

Overhearing the conversation, her coach Sarah Jantzi was alarmed.

She called Maggie's mum Gina, told her that Nassar had massaged Maggie's groin, despite her receiving treatment for a knee injury.

Gina and John were devastated. They'd sent Maggie to the training camp for a week every year for the past four years.

How could such a thing have happened?

In June 2015, Coach Jantzi reported Nassar's actions to USA Gymnastics, naming two other gymnasts she believed had also felt uneasy around Nassar.

This was passed to the president and CEO of USA Gymnastics.

For five weeks, they conducted an investigation into the allegations before handing it over to the FBI.

But Maggie, her family and Coach Jantzi heard nothing back.

Meanwhile, Maggie trained and competed, determined not to let it overshadow her hard work and jeopardise her dreams of becoming an Olympian.

She went on to win

Gymnasts testify, including Simone Biles (second from left) and Maggie Nichols (far right)

bronze medals at the Artistic Gymnastics World Championships, and modelled for posters promoting the USA Olympics team.

But her smile hid the sadness and confusion after all she'd been through.

Then, over a year after the allegation against Larry Nassar, Maggie's family heard that the FBI were no longer pursuing the case.

Maggie felt like she'd been let down, but tried her best to focus on her future career.

Today, she's determined to make the sport safe for girls

Only now, in July 2016, finding out she hadn't made it was devastating.

Was it because she'd complained about Nassar?

She realised she'd probably never know. Instead, she washed her hands of the industry, announcing her retirement from elite gymnastics.

Had all her dedication been for nothing?

In August 2016, more gymnasts began to come forward, and one – Rachael Denhollander – filed a new complaint against Larry Nassar, with the Michigan police. Then gymnast Jamie Dantzscher launched a civil lawsuit against the doctor, in California.

Nassar couldn't escape scrutiny any longer, and *The Indianapolis Star* newspaper published a report on him.

In September 2016, Nassar was fired from his post. He was later arrested, but pleaded not guilty to three counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct. He was bailed until the trial.

But this was just the tip of the iceberg.

Police revealed 50 women had made sexual-abuse claims against Nassar, and, that December, he was arrested again.

This time, he was also charged with the possession of thousands of indecent images of children.

In January 2017, after 18 victims filed a federal lawsuit against him, Nassar lost his medical licence.

That summer, he pleaded guilty to three charges of child pornography. And in November 2017, as part of a plea deal, he pleaded guilty to seven counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct.

He was sentenced to 60 years in federal prison on child pornography charges. And in January 2018, during a seven-day hearing, 156 victims, including Maggie Nichols, gave their statements in court.

After hearing the statements of her fellow athletes, Simone Biles, gymnast and winner of four gold medals, took to Twitter.

In a shocking revelation, she revealed she'd also suffered abuse at the hands of Nassar. But she vowed not to let him steal her love of the sport.

'I will not and should not carry the guilt that belongs to Larry Nassar, USAG, and others,' she wrote.

Facing pressure from the US Olympic Committee, the entire board of USA Gymnastics stepped down.

To the relief of Maggie, Simone and his other victims, Nassar was jailed for 40 to 175 years, on top of the child pornography sentence.

'I just signed your death warrant,' Judge Rosemarie Aquilina told him.

By the end of January 2018, 265 people had come forward to accuse Nassar.

In March, Michigan State University reached a £366 million settlement with 332 of Nassar's victims.

During the Senate Judiciary inquiry into the FBI's investigation of Nassar, Maggie decided to waive her right to anonymity.

'I want everyone to know that this did not happen to Gymnast 2 or to Athlete A. It happened to me, Maggie Nichols,' she stated.

She may never receive the answers she needs, but she told her story for Netflix documentary *Athlete A*.

Now Maggie is herself a gymnastics coach and is determined to make the sport safe for young girls.

'I want to be someone that people can look up to for their hard work, their inspiration and positivity,' she said.

WATCH THE DOCUMENTARY

Unpicking the complicated case against Larry Nassar, *Athlete A* tells the devastating story of his hundreds of victims. Highlighting Nassar's abuse spanning decades during his employment at USA Gymnastics and Michigan State University, the documentary highlights how these women were failed at almost every turn, from Nassar being allowed to continue practising after Maggie Nichols' initial complaint to the FBI falsifying interviews. Available on Netflix now.

WORDS: ASHLEIGH PAGE. PHOTOS: GETTY

LONG WAIT FOR TRUTH

The other si of the story

An author's retelling of a sickening crime rewrote one man's history

On 8 May 1981, 18-year-old Alice Sebold's life changed forever…

A student at Syracuse University, New York, she dreamt of becoming an author. But as she made her way home from a party, shortly after midnight, Alice was attacked.

Dragged into a tunnel.

'I'll kill you if you scream,' her attacker said.

Alice was beaten, raped and urinated on. Her attacker took her virginity.

Her white trousers stained with blood, Alice went to the police.

Officers took her statement, put her through a gruelling medical examination.

A hair was found on Alice's body, and a pocket knife was recovered at the scene.

But although there was a fingerprint, no one was linked to the crime.

Alice was told to come back if there was anything new to report.

But Alice was unwilling to be defeated. She spent the summer reeling from the assault, then returned to uni, determined to succeed.

Alice, victim of a brutal attack

Then on 5 October 1981, a man approached her in the street. She'd spotted him talking to a police officer moments earlier.

'Hey girl, don't I know you from somewhere?' he said.

Alice stared.

That face was ingrained in her memory. She was certain he was her rapist.

Reporting the encounter, she gave his description.

A tall, black man with wide, flat features.

Officer Paul Clapper remembered speaking to him and identified Anthony Broadwater, then 20, a Marine who'd recently returned to the area.

Broadwater maintained his innocence throughout

Broadwater was taken into custody.

On 4 November 1981, investigators conducted an identity parade.

Standing behind reflective glass, Alice felt confused.

It'd been six months since the assault and two of the men seemed almost identical.

Assistant District Attorney Gail Uebelhoer encouraged Alice to trust her memory and, as one man scowled, she made her choice.

But the man who Alice identified was not Anthony Broadwater.

Uebelhoer reassured her – said Broadwater had asked his friend to scowl, while he stared at the ground.

He'd tricked her.

Broadwater was charged with rape, sexual abuse, sodomy, robbery and assault.

He stood trial on 17 May 1982.

In court, Alice identified him as her attacker.

'That was indeed the man who had raped me on May 8th,' she testified.

She accepted she'd selected a different man at the identity parade.

'I was very scared,' she said, but she was certain the man in the street was her attacker.

'No doubt whatsoever,' Alice told the court.

The pocket knife was disallowed as evidence, as Alice hadn't witnessed it during the attack.

But police crime-lab analyst Steven Kaszubinski said a pubic hair taken from Broadwater had the same characteristics as the one found during Alice's examination after the

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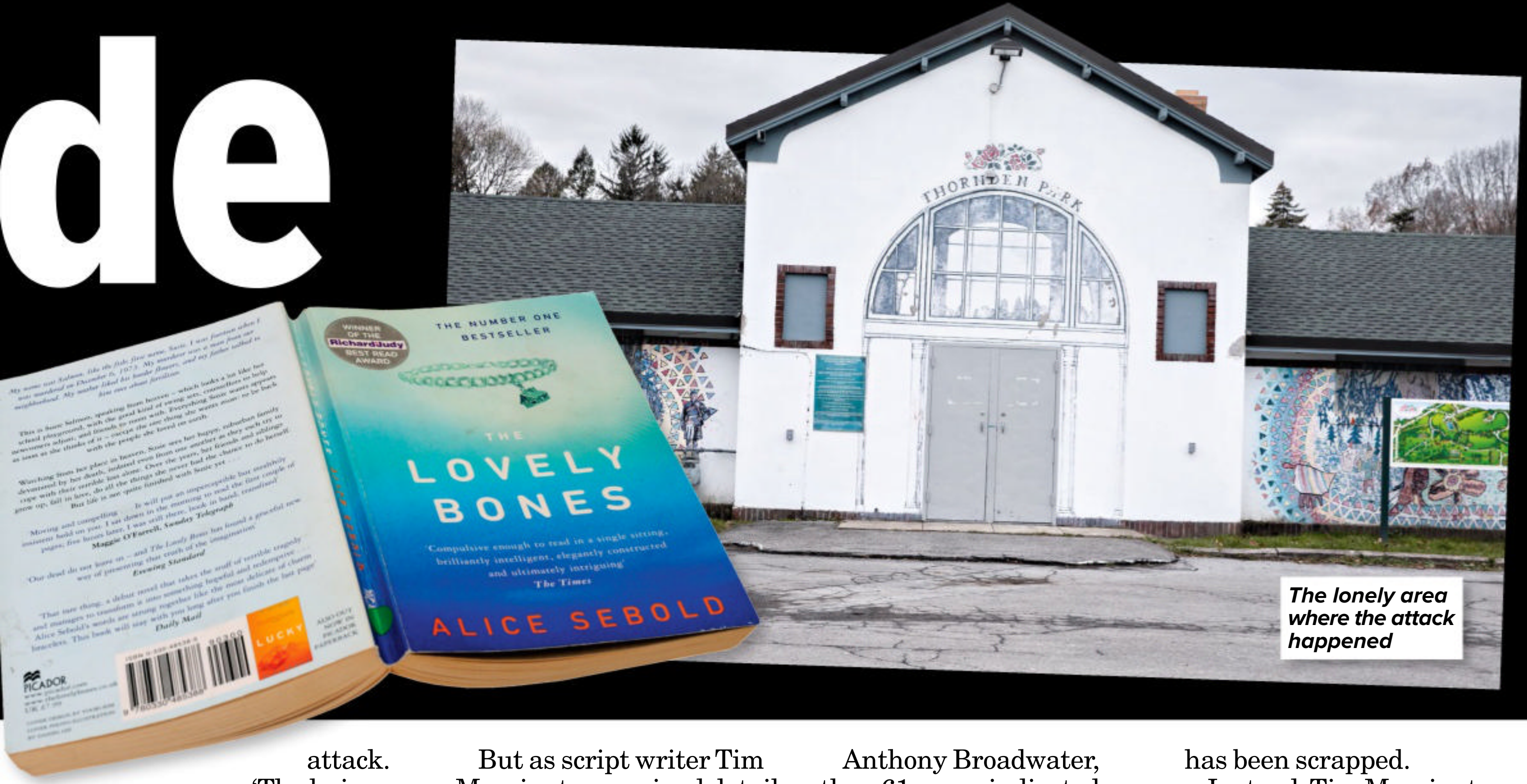


The lonely area where the attack happened

attack.

'The hair recovered was consistent as having come from Anthony Broadwater,' he testified.

During his testimony, Broadwater pointed out his scars and a chipped tooth – distinguishing features Alice hadn't described.

Still professing his innocence, Broadwater was found guilty and sentenced to up to 25 years in prison.

Following the trial, Alice immersed herself in writing and, in 1999, she landed a book deal. *Lucky*, a memoir recounting her ordeal, sold over one million copies.

Around the same time, Broadwater was released, having spent 16 years in prison, but maintaining his innocence throughout.

As a registered sex offender, he struggled to get work. His wife stood by him, but he wouldn't start a family – not wanting his children to bear the stigma of his rape conviction.

While he scraped by as a bin collector, Alice's success soared. In 2002, she released *The Lovely Bones*, selling over 10 million copies.

In 2010, it was turned into an Oscar-nominated film.

And, in 2019, producers announced a movie version of *Lucky* was in the making.

But as script writer Tim Mucciante examined details of the memoir, he became concerned about alarming inconsistencies in the case.

After consulting a private investigator, in September 2021 Mucciante found Anthony Broadwater still living in Syracuse.

Armed with a copy of *Lucky*, he told Broadwater of Alice Sebold's success.

Mucciante put Broadwater in touch with lawyers David Hammond and Melissa Swartz.

They found that the type of hair analysis used in Broadwater's trial had since been entirely discredited.

In 1989, the evidence was destroyed, meaning DNA testing was impossible.

But his misidentification was most concerning.

Hammond and Swartz believed Broadwater was innocent.

On 10 November 2021, they filed a motion seeking to vacate his convictions.

A vacated judgment makes a previous legal judgment legally void.

'Not a shred of reliable trial evidence connects him to the crime,' the motion said.

On 22 November 2021, Supreme Court Justice Gordon Cuffy agreed and the case was dismissed.

Anthony Broadwater, then 61, was vindicated.

'I never, ever, ever thought I would see the day that I would be exonerated,' he said outside court.

On 30 November 2021, Alice Sebold issued a statement, apologising for her role in sending an innocent man to jail.

I am sorry most of all for the fact that the life you could have led was unjustly robbed from you, she wrote.

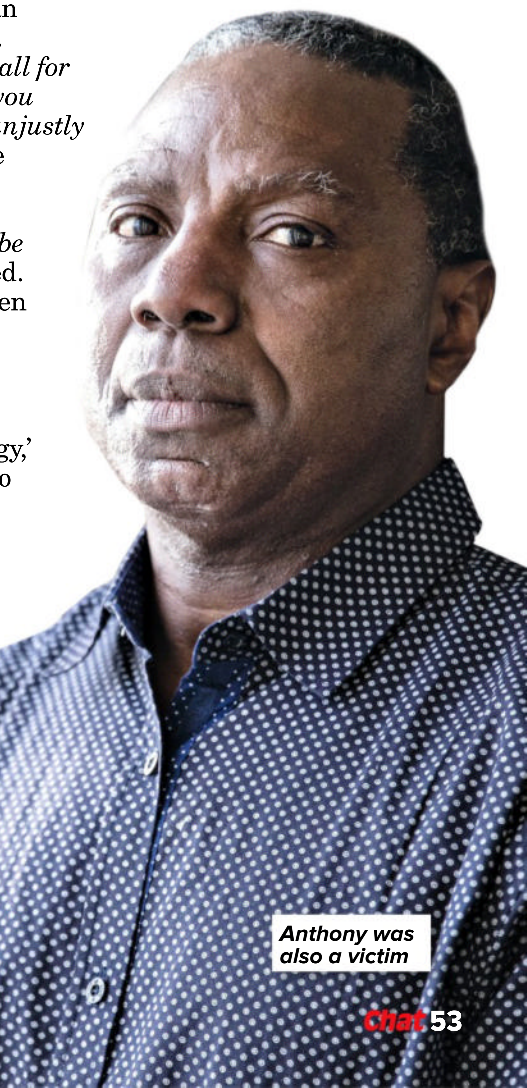
'My rapist will, in all likelihood, never be known,' she lamented.

Despite all he'd been through, Anthony Broadwater was grateful for Sebold's words.

'I accept her apology,' he said, bursting into tears.

And now, the project to turn *Lucky* into a film has been scrapped.

Instead, Tim Mucciante is working with Anthony Broadwater to create a documentary entitled *Unlucky* – to tell the story of how the terrifying crime that Alice endured had not one victim, but two.



Anthony was also a victim

WORDS: FRANCESCA WOODSTOCK. PHOTOS: LOS ANGELES TIMES, THE WASHINGTON POST VIA GETTY, ALAMY

ROTTEN TO THE CORE

Fall from gr

How did her life go from privilege to perversion?

We all know the name Ghislaine Maxwell.

The woman who was an accomplice to the billionaire paedophile Jeffrey Epstein.

Who helped him groom and sexually abuse teenage girls.

And who will likely spend the rest of her life behind bars.

But how did someone born into so much privilege end up living such a sordid life?

This isn't the first controversy to surround her, and Epstein wasn't the first man in her life to be mired in scandal.

Her father Robert Maxwell was a prominent and controversial figure, too.

Born in a village in Czechoslovakia, now part of Ukraine, to poor Jewish parents in June 1923, he escaped Nazi occupation as a teenager, fleeing to France.

But he tragically lost his parents and four of his six siblings in the Holocaust.

He was evacuated to the UK, where he joined the British Army.

On Christmas Day 1961, Robert's youngest child of 9, Ghislaine, was born, in Maisons-Laffitte, just outside Paris.

Robert was known for being strict, overbearing and critical of his children.

But Ghislaine was the apple of his eye.

By now, Maxwell had risen from extreme poverty to build an impressive publishing empire.

His various media companies owned an impressive mix of book publishers, language schools and newspapers, which eventually included the *Daily Mirror*.

Ghislaine was the apple of her father's eye

It meant the Maxwells enjoyed a life of riches and luxury, living in Headington Hill Hall, a 53-room mansion in Oxford.

Ghislaine spent her early years at Oxford High School for Girls, before being sent to boarding school at the age of 9.

After finishing her A levels, she went to work for her dad.

But nine months in, Robert sent his daughter to Spain.

He wanted her to learn to fend for herself, work, stand on her own two feet.

She returned, fluent in Spanish, and was accepted at Oxford University, where her fellow students included future Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Her peers described her as innocent, beautiful and privileged, but said she was never part of the cool crowd.

After her graduation in 1985, she hit the London social scene, spending years rubbing shoulders with the rich and famous.

At 22, Ghislaine was appointed director of Oxford Football Club by its owner, her father Robert.

Robert set his

LADY GHISLAINE
LONDON

Her dad named his yacht after her

Evil at play: Maxwell with Epstein

WORDS: MISHAAL KHAN. PHOTOS: ALAMY, GETTY, AFP VIA GETTY

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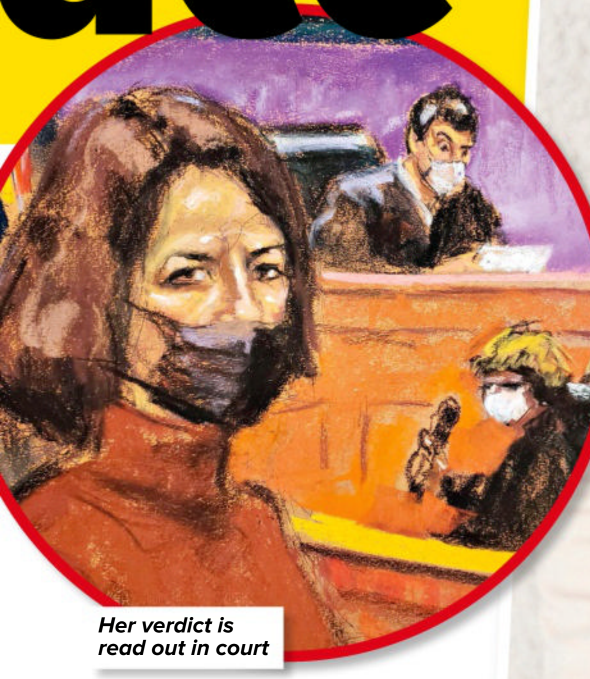
Ghislaine Maxwell grieving for her father in 1991



Her verdict is read out in court

daughter up with her own company, too, selling corporate gifts.

With so much wealth and influence behind her, Ghislaine looked set for life.

Throughout the 80s, Ghislaine made her mark on London's A-list circuit.

She spent a lot of time aboard Robert's yacht, the *Lady Ghislaine*, named after his favourite child.

Fully stocked with a sauna, Jacuzzi and gym, it was the perfect getaway.

It was 1991 when Ghislaine crossed paths with Jeffrey Epstein, a financier, meeting through mutual friends.

But that same year, in November, Ghislaine's world shattered when Robert died, aged 68.

He'd been out at sea off the Canary Islands, on his beloved yacht, when he'd mysteriously gone missing.

His naked body was later discovered by fishermen, adrift in the Atlantic.

An inquest found the cause of death as a heart attack and accidental drowning.

But various conspiracy theories rippled through the Press.

Had he been killed? Taken his own life?

What *was* known was that Robert Maxwell had left behind a mountain of debts, and there was a huge financial fallout.

Ghislaine moved to New York, getting away from the rumours surrounding her father's death.

She moved to a one-room flat on the Upper East Side.

And there, a romantic relationship between her and Jeffrey Epstein began.

Epstein was a murky multimillionaire financier, with luxury homes in New York, New Mexico and Florida, plus his own private island, but the source of his great wealth was never understood.

A power couple, he and Ghislaine socialised with the likes of Bill Clinton, Donald Trump and Prince Andrew.

But beneath their glittering existence, evil was at play.

Over the coming decades, Ghislaine Maxwell and Jeffrey Epstein destroyed the lives of many young, innocent girls.

Over time, as some of the girls – now women – spoke out, authorities investigated.

In June 2008, Epstein pleaded guilty to procuring a girl under 18 for prostitution and was jailed for 18 months.

Then, in July 2019, he was arrested again, on sex-trafficking charges.

But a month later, as he awaited trial in a New York jail, Epstein was found dead in his cell.

Ghislaine Maxwell was subsequently arrested in July 2020, and in December 2021 was found guilty of charges including sex trafficking and conspiracy.

In June 2022 Maxwell was sentenced to 20 years in jail. Two months later, her former lawyers sued her for allegedly failing to pay her legal fees.

After years of wielding power, mixing with the rich and famous, and living a life of entitlement and luxury, Ghislaine Maxwell's future looks very different.

It was 1991 when she crossed paths with Epstein

LONG WAIT FOR THE TRUTH

Taken to the grave

The answers to the mystery of a murdered child lay long buried

She was a shy little schoolgirl with shiny, dark hair and a gap between her front teeth.

Marise Ann Chiverella, 9, attended a church school and dreamt of becoming a nun.

At home, she'd play the pipe organ with her siblings – Barry, Carmen-Marie, Ronald and David.

On 18 March 1964, Marise left the family home in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, carrying a parcel of canned food for her teacher.

She was seen at 8.10am, hurrying to get to St Joseph's Parochial School for morning Mass. But Marise never arrived.

A frantic search ensued and then, at 1pm, came a devastating discovery. Marise's body was found in a pit two miles away from her home.

The little girl had been raped, beaten and strangled. Her horrified parents were heartbroken.

They were pictured, sitting together in shock, staring at a photo of Marise.

What monster could have done this to their child?

In the weeks that followed, the family held the funeral, while the police vowed to catch Marise's killer.

They worked tirelessly. But, despite their efforts, the investigation proved fruitless.

Time marched on.

In the years after Marise's death, the world changed beyond recognition.

The Vietnam War ended, the first man walked on the moon, Martin Luther King was shot dead and a band called The Beatles became the world's biggest phenomenon.

But all that time, the Chiverellas wrestled with their grief, the pipe organ sitting silently in their home, a painful reminder of their loss.

Before the family meals, Marise's mum Mary would always utter the same prayer.

'Please help the Pennsylvania State Police find the man that hurt my daughter,' she said.

But decades passed.

Then, in 2007 – more than 40 years after Marise's murder – forensic scientists at a Pennsylvania State Police Laboratory developed a suspect profile, based on a DNA sample left on Marise's jacket.

The DNA was entered into a national database and checked regularly. But no suspects were revealed.

By now, Marise's father Carmen had died. He'd never know justice for his much-loved daughter.

In 2009, Mary described her unending grief.

'She's on my mind every day. Things we do, or somebody says something, it always reminds me of her,' she said.

Five years later, Mary died, too.

In 2018, using the DNA samples, investigators created photo mock-ups, predicting how the suspect would have looked at the ages of 25, 40 and 60.

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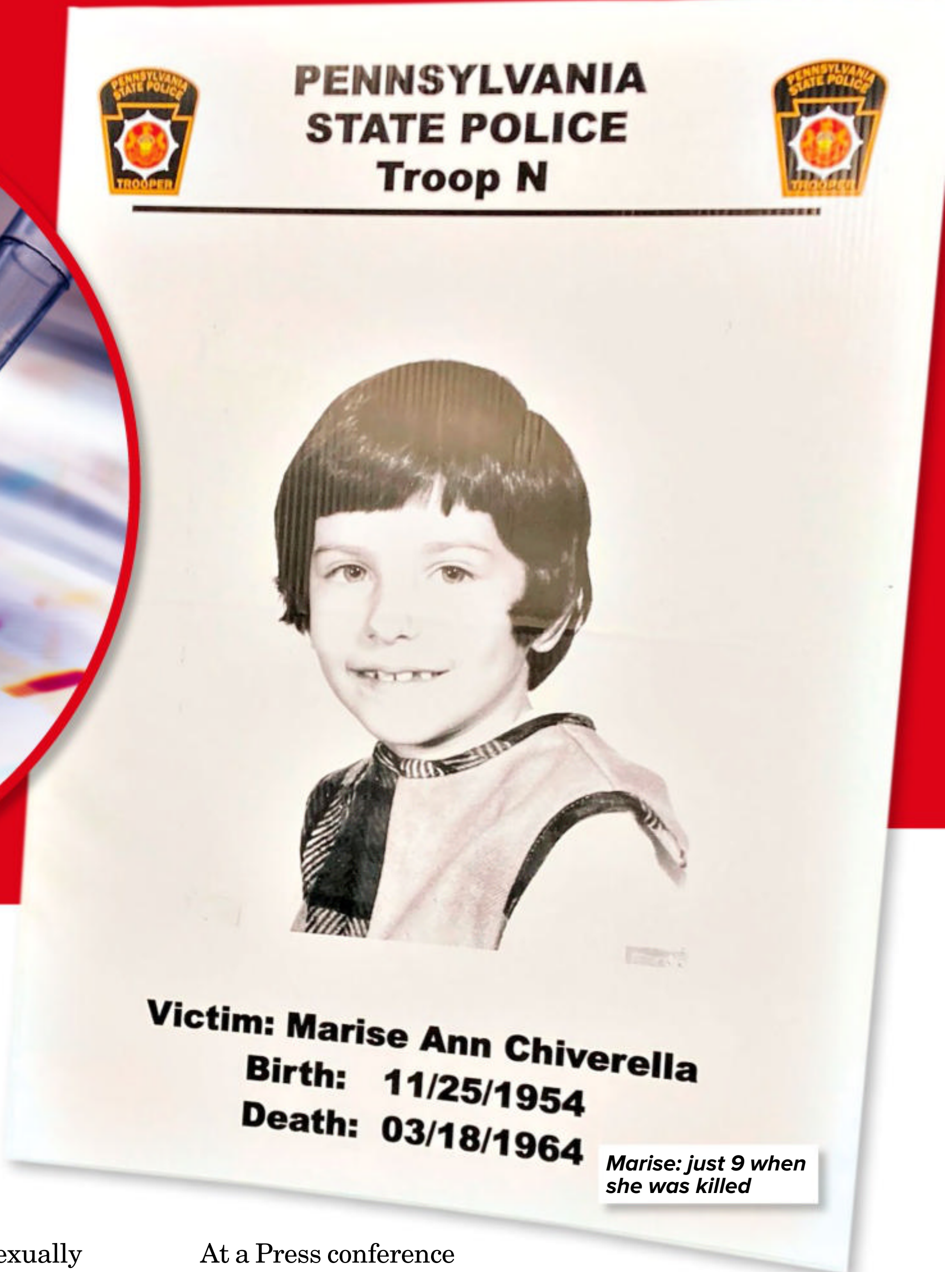
STATE POLICE

Eric Schubert's help was crucial in solving the 1964 cold case

WORDS: LOUISE BATY. PHOTOS (DNA PHOTO IS A LIBRARY IMAGE): MICHAEL RUBINKAM/AP/SHUTTERSTOCK, GETTY/IMAGE SOURCE

DNA profiling had moved on



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STATE POLICE
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Victim: Marise Ann Chiverella
Birth: 11/25/1954
Death: 03/18/1964

Marise: just 9 when she was killed

And yet, still no suspects were named.

But then, in 2020, a teenage genealogy expert contacted investigators.

On the face of it, college student Eric Schubert, 18, was a most unlikely cold-case investigator.

Only, he'd been obsessed with the science of genetics since the age of 10, and he had even helped solve previous cases.

The investigators were grateful for his input.

The DNA sample was sent to a genealogy database – and there was a match with someone thought to be a distant relative of a suspect.

Based on this, Eric Schubert put together a family tree and helped the police trawl census and military records.

The team narrowed their list to four suspects, eventually landing on one name…

A man called James Forte.

Was he Marise's killer?

The Hazleton man, who'd been 22 at the time of the girl's murder, had no connection with the Chiverella family, but lived nearby.

He'd carried on living in the town in the years after Marise's death. And he had been involved in other crimes.

In 1974, he'd admitted sexually assaulting a woman in an area used for coal mining. The victim told the police she thought she'd have been killed had a witness not disturbed the attack.

The team narrowed their list, landed on one name…

In 1978, Forte had also been charged with a minor offence but had escaped serving jail time.

Then, two years later, he'd suddenly dropped dead in the Hazleton bar where he'd worked.

In January 2022, investigators were granted permission to exhume Forte's body.

Tests found his DNA matched the sample that had been collected from Marise's jacket in 2007.

It was confirmation: James Forte had been Marise's killer.

At a Press conference in February 2022, lead police investigator Colonel Mark Baron gave an emotional statement.

He wiped his eyes as he explained that Marise's murder was thought to be one of the oldest cases in the country to be solved using genetic genealogy.

'This is a very important day for our department,' he said. 'Even though it took nearly 58 years for this case to be solved, I think this should instil in the families of victims across the State, and across the country, a sense of hope.

'And that hope is that, no matter how long it may take, we as law enforcement will never give up in trying to find the perpetrators of these heinous crimes that go on. God willing, in life or in death, you will be found.'

Eric Schubert stood alongside police at the Press conference and explained how he'd got involved with genealogy.

'I was home sick a lot when I was a kid, so I would see genealogy commercials, and I would say, "Wait a second, maybe I could do that,"' he said.

'I'm certainly thankful I started,' he added.

Marise's surviving relatives spoke of mixed emotions.

'We have so many precious memories of Marise. At the same time, our family will always feel the emptiness and the sorrow of her absence,' said her sister Carmen-Marie.

Tragically, Marise's parents had died before the truth emerged. But her mother's prayers were answered, in the form of a young man with a passion for science – and justice.

Buried alive

The lives of 26 children lay in the hands of a bus driver

Unlikely hero: Ed Ray with a happy passenger

Heading home from a school trip, a group of 26 children were looking forward to telling parents about the fun they'd had.

It was 4pm on 15 July 1976.

Bus driver Ed Ray, then 55, was driving the 19 girls and seven boys, aged between 5 and 14, home.

They'd been at Chowchilla fairgrounds swimming pool, in California.

As Ed drove along, he spotted a van parked in the road, blocking the way.

Ed wondered if the man standing beside the vehicle needed help.

Stopping the bus, he gasped as the man pulled out a gun and boarded.

Then another man appeared, wearing nylon stockings over his head, and held a gun to Ed's head.

Ed was yanked from his seat while one of the gunmen drove the bus down the road and someone else followed in the van behind.

Children cried, terrified.

After driving 100 miles in the sweltering heat, the three kidnappers dumped the bus in a ditch.

They'd arrived at a remote rock quarry.

With only construction lights illuminating the huge, dark pit, the men ordered their 27 victims to climb down a ladder, one by one, into what looked like a massive grave.

It was a large old truck buried 6ft underground.

Inside, there were makeshift cells, with wooden panels and windows painted over to block out light.

No one could see in or out.

No food, water or anywhere to go to the loo.

The kids were terrified in the pitch-black, in a space measuring 8ft by 16ft.

As the last of the group descended, the ladder connecting them to the outside world was removed.

Hours passed as they waited on old mattresses.

For rescue. Or death.

The youngest cried as the older kids, equally terrified, tried to comfort them.

The stench of filth inside the makeshift prison was overwhelming in the intense California heat.

At some point, the kidnappers talked outside about their plan to demand a $5 million (around £4 million) ransom for the safe return of the children.

Eventually, they fell asleep.

That's when bus driver Ed took matters into his own hands.

Working quietly, Ed got the kids to stack the mattresses

Working as quietly as he could, he got the kids to stack the mattresses and climb them.

Managing to reach the top of the trailer, Ed found a heavy manhole cover blocking the way out.

Teaming up with one of the older kids, Michael Marshall, then 14, they took turns to push the cover, then dig through the dirt, until rays of light shone through.

Freedom!

The younger kids climbed on the shoulders of the older ones, and all the hostages eventually escaped while the kidnappers slept.

After more than 24 hours of hell, they were discovered by quarry workers, who called the police.

The kidnappers were long gone. But the kids and Ed were taken to safety, where they were interviewed.

Four hours after their dramatic escape, the kids had to board another bus, to be reunited with their frantic families.

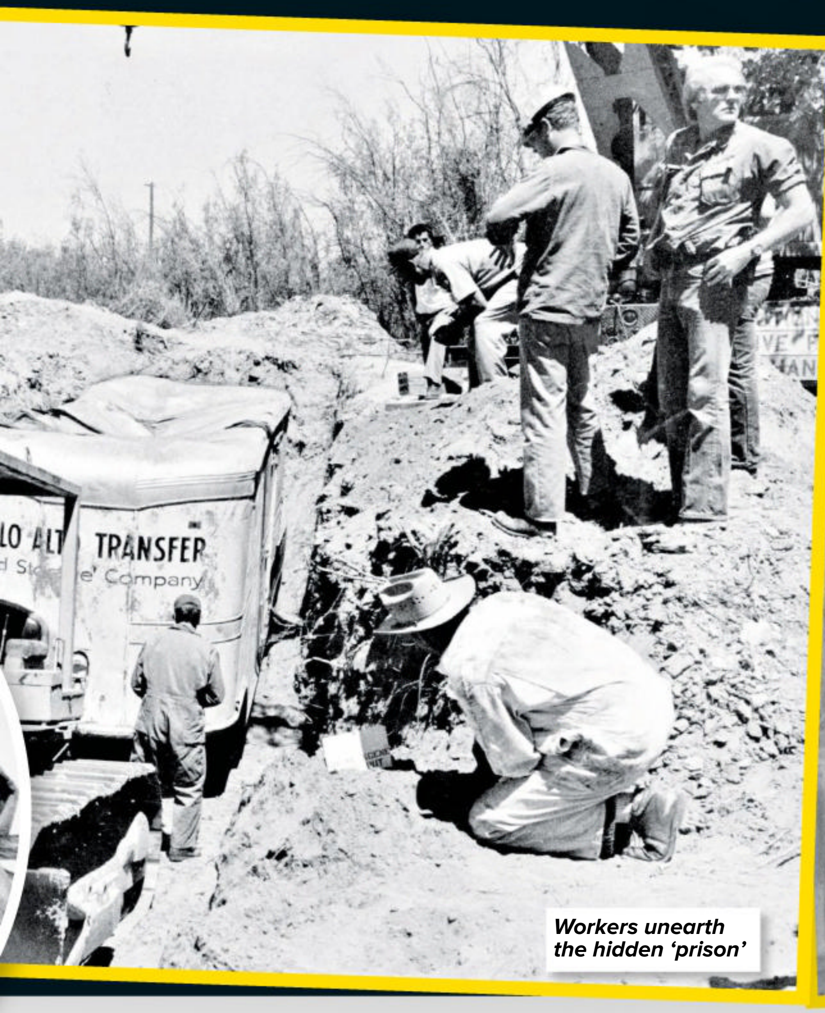
When the bus had failed to return from the trip, the families had alerted police.

They'd found the abandoned bus but no sign of Ed or the kids.

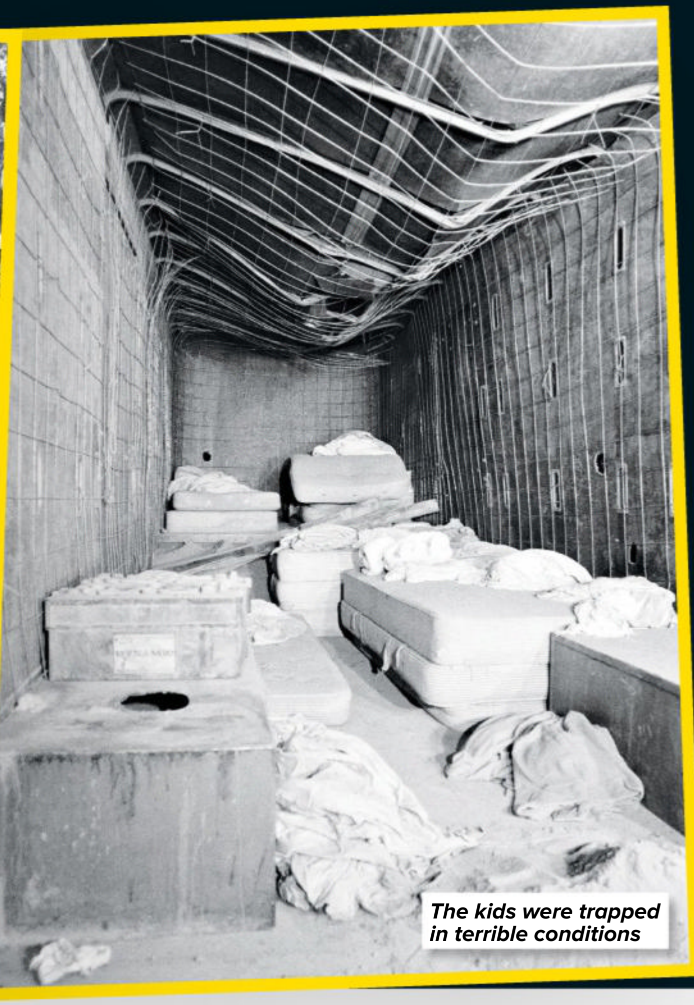
Later, police dug up the trailer buried deep in the quarry, hoping to find clues.

Months before the kidnapping, security guards

WORDS: MISHAAL KHAN. PHOTOS: GETTY



Workers unearth the hidden 'prison'



The kids were trapped in terrible conditions

reported seeing three men digging there.

Frederick Newhall Woods, 24, whose father owned the rock quarry, business partner James Schoenfeld, 24, and James' younger brother Richard, 22.

Police got a search warrant for the 100-acre estate and found more.

A plan documenting the kidnapping.

Even a ransom note, stating they were after $2.5 million (around £2 million), an amount they planned to double.

Police found the fingerprints of two of the men on a fast-food wrapper, where the kidnappers had listed the hostages' names.

A week later, Richard Schoenfeld turned himself in. Days later, Woods was tracked down in Vancouver, Canada, and James Schoenfeld also arrested.

In July 1977, they pleaded guilty to 27 counts of kidnapping for ransom.

In December, Frederick Woods and the Schoenfelds were found guilty of three counts of kidnapping with bodily harm.

Each were sentenced to life behind bars, without the chance of parole.

Only, in 1980, while their victims were still coming to terms with their ordeal, the trio's sentences were overturned.

A judge concluded they hadn't caused bodily harm to their hostages and could one day be considered for parole.

In June 2012, a month after Ed Ray died, aged 91, Richard Schoenfeld was granted parole, followed by his brother three years later.

Then, in 2022, after 17 failed attempts, Woods, 70, was approved for parole.

During his court hearing, he insisted he was a changed man.

'Now, I fully understand the terror and trauma I caused. I take full responsibility for this heinous act,' he said.

News of his release was met with mixed reactions from survivors of that fateful day.

Larry Park, who'd been 6 at the time, said he'd since forgiven the men.

For others, the trauma lingers.

'I'm 50 years old and I can have an anxiety attack over getting in the car with my husband,' survivor Jennifer Brown Hyde said.

Lynda Carrejo Labendeira, who was 10 at the time of the crime, said her kidnappers should not have been given freedom.

'The memories never go away,' she said. 'If your child was kidnapped and buried alive, how long is long enough?'

Cuffed: James Schoenfeld and Frederick Woods

The real vi

Just like a Hollywood film script, only this crime was horribly true

One spring afternoon, a panicked call came through to the Vallejo Police Department in California.

Aaron Quinn, 30, said his girlfriend Denise Huskins, 29, had been abducted.

It was 23 March 2015 and Dr Quinn claimed intruders had broken into the couple's house during the night.

He said they were forced to wear blacked-out swimming goggles, and told that physical therapist Denise was going to be taken.

She'd only be released if he paid an $8,500 ransom.

An investigation was launched, with hundreds of police officers and sniffer dogs combing the area.

But detectives turned their sights on Aaron.

Unconvinced by his abduction claims.

Despite saying Denise had been taken around 2am, he hadn't raised the alarm until early afternoon.

During 18 hours of police interrogation, Aaron claimed he'd been drugged by the intruders, rendering him unconscious for hours.

Said he'd been told there was a 'mirroring app' on his phone, meaning the abductors would know he'd called cops and Denise would be at risk.

Then, an email was sent to a reporter at the *San Francisco Chronicle* newspaper from an anonymous group claiming to have Denise, warning cops not to intervene.

Accompanying it was an audio file of a woman, saying, 'My name is Denise Huskins. I am kidnapped, otherwise I'm fine.'

During an emotional press conference, her dad Mike Huskins begged, 'Don't hurt her, please don't hurt her.'

The situation appeared bleak.

Until the next day when Denise turned up alive.

Only, she was in Huntington Beach, California, near her mum's house, 400 miles from where she'd been taken.

Been missing for 48 hours.

Many expected Vallejo police to go after her abductors, but they released a shocking statement.

Said there was no evidence to support the claims this was an abduction.

During a press conference, Vallejo Police Department public information officer Lieutenant Kenny Park claimed Denise and Aaron had made the whole thing up, that the kidnapping was a 'wild goose chase'.

He said, 'Mr Quinn and Ms Huskins have plundered valuable resources away from our community and taken the focus away from the true victims of our community, while instilling fear among our community members. If anything, it is Mr Quinn and Ms Huskins that owe this community an apology.'

Lieutenant Park said Aaron Quinn's delay in reporting his girlfriend missing had aroused suspicions.

Police claimed Denise was a real life 'Gone Girl'

'It was such an incredible story, we initially had a hard time believing it,' he said. 'Upon further investigation, we couldn't substantiate any of the things he was saying.'

The bizarre chain of events was likened to the plot of Hollywood film *Gone Girl*, starring Ben Affleck and Rosamund Pike, about a woman who stages her own abduction – Denise was tagged as a real life 'Gone Girl'.

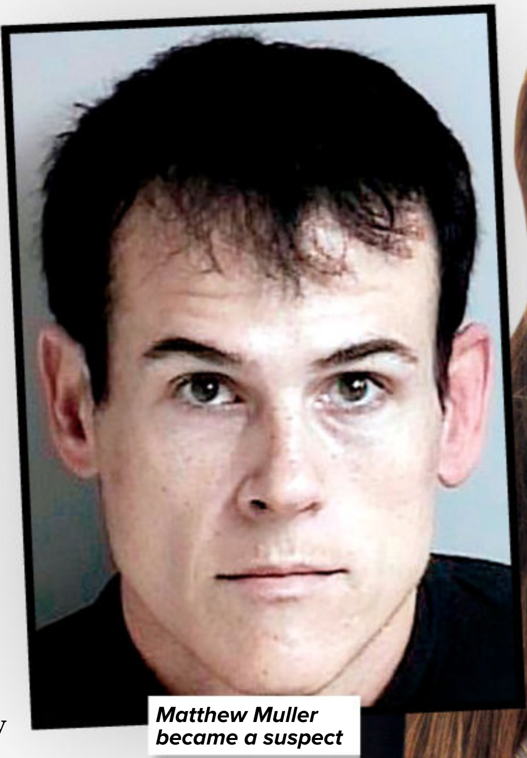
But then the *San Francisco Chronicle* received another email…

The 15-page document – allegedly from Denise's kidnappers – insisted she and Aaron were telling the truth.

The police investigation continued until, in July 2015, there was an arrest.

Disbarred Harvard-trained lawyer Matthew Muller was already under suspicion for carrying out a similar home break-in, in Dublin, Ohio.

When cops searched his home and car, they found Aaron



Matthew Muller became a suspect

ctim?

Denise was missing for 48 hours

Quinn's stolen laptop and a pair of blacked-out swimming goggles with a strand of Denise's hair.

The car's vehicle's navigation system history listed a Huntington Beach address.

Muller, who had once served as a US marine, said he suffered from psychosis and bipolar disorder.

Rather than being part of a gang of criminals, it appeared that he was the only suspect.

Heartbreakingly, Denise revealed that she had been raped by her abductor.

With Muller charged with a string of offences, Vallejo Police Chief Andrew Bidou apologised to the couple for Lieutenant Park's 'hoax' accusations.

'While these comments were based on our findings at the time, they proved to be unnecessarily harsh and offensive,' he said.

In March 2017, Denise – by now married to Aaron Quinn – faced Muller, then 39, in court.

She described the 'hell that we have survived' in an emotional testimony, after her kidnapper pleaded guilty to kidnapping.

'You treated me like an object, a toy, an animal,' she said. 'I still have nightmares every night.'

Aaron also spoke, saying he 'cannot and will not ever be the same'.

The court heard how Muller had used a remote-controlled drone to spy on the couple before breaking into their home with a fake gun, tying them both up and making them drink a sleep-inducing liquid.

They were then blindfolded while Muller played a pre-recorded message to appear as though there was more than one kidnapper.

Muller put Denise in his car boot and took her to his home in South Lake Tahoe, where he held her for two days before driving her to Huntington Beach.

Investigators uncovered videos of Muller arranging cameras in a bedroom and recording himself twice sexually assaulting Denise.

During and after the kidnapping, Muller used an anonymous email address to send messages, claiming Denise was abducted by a gang.

Jailing Muller for 40 years, US District Judge Troy Nunley called the abduction a 'heinous, atrocious, horrible crime'.

Shackled and wearing an orange prison jumpsuit, Muller showed no emotion.

The following year, Aaron and Denise, who referred to the 'Gone Girl' tag as the 'worst insult of her life', received $2.5 million (£2 million) compensation from Vallejo police.

Five years after her release, Denise delivered their daughter Olivia, which she said was a 'rebirth' for her in terms of her recovery from the kidnapping.

In March 2022, Muller was sentenced to a further 31 years at state Solano county superior court, to be served concurrently with the federal sentence.

Muller also pleaded guilty to robbery of an inhabited dwelling, residential burglary and false imprisonment.

And now the world knows who is the criminal and who is the victim.

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Denise and Aaron weren't believed

The scene of the break-in

WORDS: LOUISE BATY. PHOTOS: AP/SHUTTERSTOCK, GETTY

UNHAPPY FAMILIES

Where's my baby?

Shanara's heart was broken when her newborn was kidnapped. Two decades on, their long-awaited reunion didn't go as expected...

Shanara Mobley may have only been 16 years old when she gave birth to her daughter Kamiyah on 10 July 1998, but she was already a devoted mummy.

'Open your eyes so you can see how pretty your mama is,' she cooed to her newborn.

And as her daughter gazed up at her, she said it was the best feeling ever – yet it was a feeling that wasn't going to last.

Just hours later, a woman dressed in blue scrubs and surgical gloves came in to see the mother and child.

Shanara was still groggy from an epidural so didn't question the nurse carrying her baby away.

It was only when the baby's paternal grandmother Velma saw the woman pick up the baby bag on the way out that anyone became suspicious.

By then, it was too late.

Despite staff searching Jacksonville's University Medical Center, there was no sign of the 'nurse' or, more importantly, Kamiyah.

It was every mum's worst nightmare.

Sobbing, Shanara went on press conferences just hours later, pleading for her baby's safe return.

But it didn't happen.

The police were so confused by the disappearance that they even suggested Shanara had sold her baby or given her away.

But they couldn't have been more wrong.

The baby had indeed been kidnapped – by a woman called Gloria Williams, who had pretended to be a nurse.

Gloria had recently suffered a devastating miscarriage but had kept it secret.

When she returned to Walterboro, South Carolina, with a newborn daughter, there was no reason to question whether it was her biological child.

She renamed Kamiyah, Alexis Manigo and raised her with her sons Antoine and Andre.

When she was old enough, she told Kamiyah that her real dad was a man called Charles Manigo, but that they'd broken up before she was born.

When Kamiyah was in middle school, Gloria met and married Wrenoskie Williams, a 55-year-old truck driver, who Kamiyah looked up to as a father figure.

Kamiyah, growing up as Alexis, was loved and protected, but Shanara's life was taking a different path.

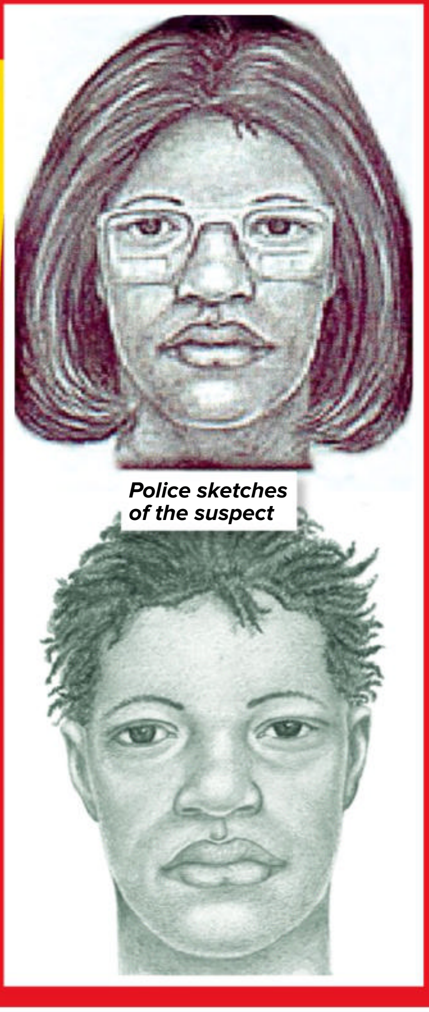
After she split with Craig Aiken, Kamiyah's biological father, she fell into a deep depression.

But everything was

Gloria with the child she named Alexis

Shanara wept at Gloria's trial

Kamiyah was stolen from the hospital


Police sketches of the suspect

about to change.

In 2015, Kamiyah applied for a job in a restaurant and asked her mum for her social security number.

Gloria finally broke down and told 'her' daughter the truth.

Desperate for answers, Kamiyah turned to the internet to piece together exactly what had happened to her.

She even tried calling Shanara's number, but hung up when she heard her biological mum's voice.

It wasn't for another two years that Gloria was arrested

However, it wasn't for another two years, in January 2017, after the police had received two tip-offs, that Gloria was finally arrested for what she'd done.

It was only then that Kamiyah was introduced to her birth parents.

'I finally have my baby back,' Shanara said when she hugged her daughter for the first time in 19 years.

Despite their emotional reunion, however, it wasn't going to be smooth sailing for the family.

Kamiyah remained close to Gloria, the woman who had both kidnapped and raised her.

Even spoke out in her defence before the trial.

'Don't get me wrong, I do feel like it was wrong, but we talked about it and I can understand at the time what was going on,' Kamiyah said.

'I sympathise with her, I'm not mad at her – of course I forgive her.

'I am certain that she's going to get time but I'm hoping not very, very long.

'I think they should be lenient. It's not like she took me and tortured me my whole life – she took care of me very well.'

The judge didn't take her words into account and Gloria was sentenced to 18 years in prison after accepting a plea deal and admitting kidnapping and interference with custody.

Kamiyah didn't let this stand in the way of her relationship with Gloria, however, and spoke to her every week on the phone.

It was something Shanara found difficult to deal with.

'When we first met, we were inseparable – we talked every day, and I felt she would just come on into our lives,' she said.

'I didn't know this kidnapper had such a hold on her.

'I can see that it's my child but I can also see traits from the kidnapper in her. She would defend the kidnapper to me.

'She blames me for everything – I think she blames me that this woman is in jail.'

It must, therefore, have broken Shanara's heart that when Gloria made a request to have her sentence reduced, Kamiyah wrote a pleading letter to the judge.

'I am writing this letter in support of my mother, Gloria Williams. I would like to make it clear that she is my mother. She raised me, and not only provided for my needs, but she loved me unconditionally.

'I had a well-rounded life, and I am an independent, college-educated and deeply spiritual person because of all my mom gave me… I love my mother and I wholeheartedly support her. I ask for the court's mercy, as I need my mother home.'

Again, Kamiyah's words were unheard, and Duval County Circuit Judge Marianne Aho denied the motion in March 2022, saying she 'did not find a basis to undo the original sentencing judge's decision'.

It seems that despite the truth being uncovered and the birth family being reunited, there is still a while to go before it is a case of happy families.

WORDS: SARAH WHITELEY. PHOTOS: AP/SHUTTERSTOCK, ALAMY

OBEY, OR ELSE...

The demo headmast

He was supposed to be their teacher, not their abuser...

WORDS: LOUISE BATY PHOTOS: AFP VIA GETTY

He was a respected authority figure, a man entrusted to nurture and protect the vulnerable youngsters in his care. Yet teacher Herry Wirawan betrayed that trust in the worst possible way.

Married Wirawan, 36, had run a ‘pesantren’ – an Islamic boarding school for girls aged 11 to 16 – in Bali, Indonesia since 2016.

There were tens of thousands of religious schools in Indonesia, offering an education for children of poorer families.

When he set up his school, Herry Wirawan put forward scholarships for students in the impoverished Bandung City area and taught religious studies to his young pupils.

He offered them a chance to be educated and seek a better life for themselves.

But the school rules were strict.

When young pupils arrived at the boarding school, their mobile phones were confiscated and they were only allowed to go home to see their families once a year.

The school had been open for five years when, in May 2021, one child’s family discovered something shocking about their daughter when she returned home for her yearly holiday.

She said that she had recently given birth.

There was an investigation and a man was accused of raping the girl and getting her pregnant.

The girls had been too scared to tell anyone

The father?

Herry Wirawan.

The girl’s head teacher.

And it appeared that she wasn’t his only victim.

Wirawan was accused of subjecting his pupils to years of grooming and abuse, of raping multiple girls at the school since 2016 and making at least eight of them pregnant.

Between them, his alleged victims had given birth to nine babies. The police said that the girls had been too scared to tell anyone what was going on.

As Wirawan was charged with multiple offences, there was a public outcry in Indonesia over the rates of sexual violence and abuse of women and girls.

In January 2022, the Acting Mayor of Bandung Yana Mulyana declared his support for the death-penalty charge against the former teacher, saying that an extraordinary crime warranted the highest form of punishment.

‘We put our children under his care but suddenly he treats them improperly,’ he said. ‘Can you imagine what their parents feel?’

At Bandung District Court, in February 2022, Wirawan pleaded guilty to grooming and raping 13 victims and apologised to them and their families.

The court heard that he had used 10 locations to

Bandung City in Indonesia’s West Java province

n ter

The accused: Wirawan in court

sexually assault his young victims, including a school room, a school office, an apartment and a hotel room, luring the children there on the pretext of giving massages.

He had intimidated his victims, saying they 'must obey the teacher' and had kept them quiet by promising to finance college fees and care for the babies conceived.

Prosecutors urged the court to impose a death sentence on the repeat rapist, but judges jailed him for life instead, also rejecting calls for the now-convicted paedophile to be chemically castrated.

After the trial, the victims' families spoke of their devastation that Wirawan hadn't received a harsher sentence, which would, hopefully, potentially deter other abusers.

'This wound will never be healed as long as we live, maybe until we die,' said the uncle of one of Wirawan's 13 victims.

'The pain we are feeling is indescribable. We don't feel heard.'

But, after the prosecution lawyers appealed the verdict, an Indonesian High Court overturned the initial sentence and in April 2022, Herry Wirawan was sentenced to death by firing squad, with the Indonesian government promising to pay up to 85 million Indonesian rupiahs (£4394) in compensation to each of his victims.

'What he had done had caused trauma and suffering to the victims and their parents,' the appeal judges explained in a statement.

The judges also ruled that Herry Wirawan's assets, including his school foundation, be auctioned off to benefit the victims and their children – and that the nine babies born to the victims should be put into care until the girls were ready and able to look after them.

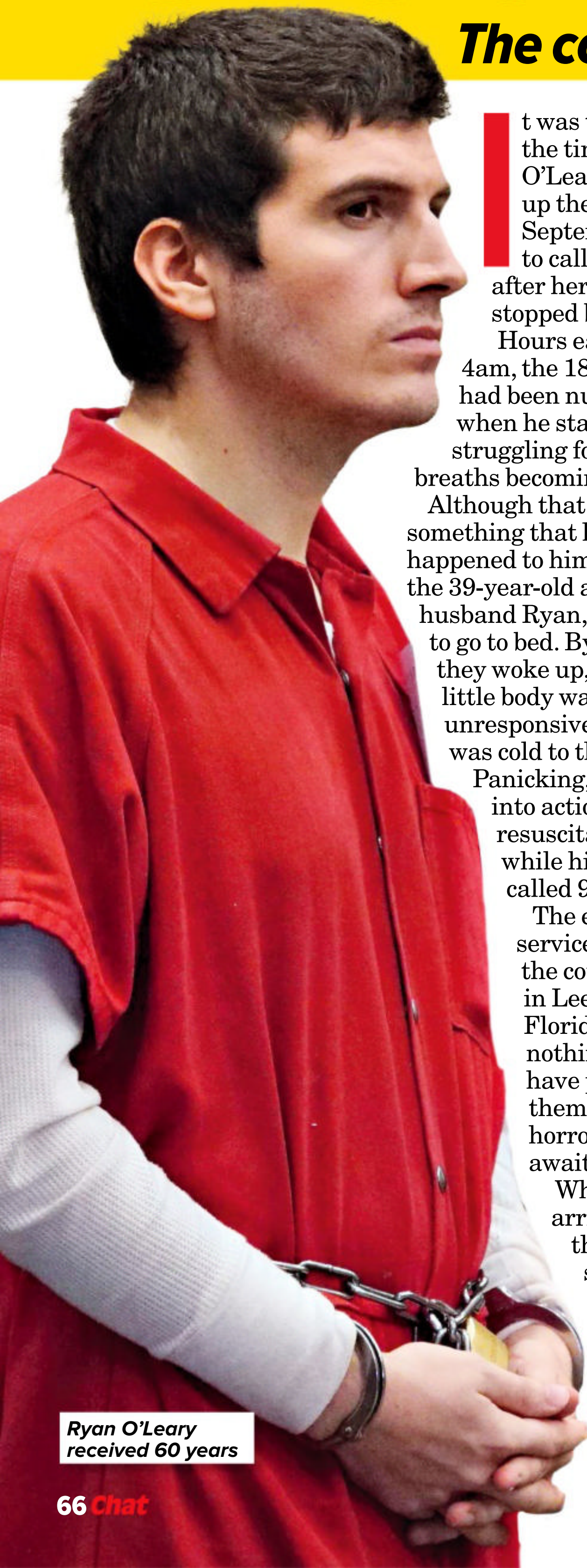
Wirawan's trial led to women's rights activists protesting for a new sexual violence eradication bill in Indonesia.

They argued that it was the only way to prevent vulnerable girls being subjected to predatory abuse at school – the very place where all children should feel protected and safe.

He betrayed the trust of parents and pupils

Starved

The couple's kids didn't stand a chance...



Ryan O'Leary received 60 years

It was too late by the time Sheila O'Leary picked up the phone in September 2019 to call for help after her son Ezra stopped breathing.

Hours earlier, at 4am, the 18-month-old had been nursing when he started struggling for air, his breaths becoming shallow.

Although that was something that had never happened to him before, the 39-year-old and her husband Ryan, 33, decided to go to bed. By the time they woke up, Ezra's little body was unresponsive and he was cold to the touch.

Panicking, Ryan leapt into action trying to resuscitate his son, while his wife called 911.

The emergency services rushed to the couple's home in Lee County, Florida. But nothing could have prepared them for the horror that awaited them.

When medics arrived, they were shocked at how small the toddler was.

At just 17lb – 7lb below average – Ezra was the size of a 7-month-old baby, a long way off a happy, healthy child of nearly 2.

'He hasn't eaten for a week,' O'Leary told the police. 'I've only been breastfeeding him because I thought he was teething.'

Tragically, there was nothing the paramedics could do to help.

Nothing could have prepared medics for the horror

Ezra's lifeless body couldn't be revived and he was pronounced dead at the scene.

Unbelievably, there was more horror to come

Ezra's older brothers, aged 3 and 5, were also in a bad condition. Checking them over, the medics could see that the boys were also extremely underweight.

They had yellowing skin and one of them had such poor dental hygiene that his teeth were black.

Sheila O'Leary's 11-year-old daughter from a previous relationship was only marginally less malnourished. It was later revealed that she'd been visiting her biological father every two months, where she was getting a healthier diet.

'We mainly eat mangoes, bananas, avocados and rambutans,' Sheila told police about the family's strict vegan diet.

They'd only consume raw fruit and vegetables, with Ezra also being breastfed.

Seeing the danger the children were in, police removed Ezra's brothers, who were homeschooled by their mother, from the family home and put them into the protection of child services.

Their sister was sent to live with her dad.

But, while it was clear that Ezra was severely underweight, it wasn't until November 2019 that his official cause of death was revealed. *Malnutrition and dehydration*.

It was also discovered that, after being born at home, he'd never seen a doctor in his life.

Not being able to escape the evidence, the O'Learys turned themselves in to the police shortly after.

As the couple were charged with counts of murder, manslaughter, child abuse and neglect, state attorney Amira Fox

WORDS: ANNA VERDON. PHOTOS: ALAMY, GETTY

l of love

couldn't hide her shock at the tragedy.

'The evidence and crime scene, in this case, are gut-wrenching,' she said. 'These are images that, as a mother and state attorney, I will not be able to forget.'

Yet, as the court hearings began in December 2019, the couple pleaded not guilty to the charges and were held in police custody for the next couple of years while the case continued.

Shaken by the news, the couple's neighbours couldn't believe what had been happening behind closed doors in the house nearby.

They said the O'Learys had only moved into the area the previous year and they'd bought their children some toys and bubbles as a welcome gift.

'There were no red flags, they just lived a secret life,' they said, stunned at the horror on their doorstep.

Ezra's helpless wailing would go ignored

Finally, in July 2022, Sheila O'Leary faced trial at Cape Coral, Florida.

The authorities said that she should have known better than to let her child starve, especially as she'd been taken to court in the past and ordered to take a parenting class to help her look after her eldest child.

The court also heard that Ezra had first become ill five months earlier, in April, and that he'd constantly cry with hunger.

Yet his helpless wailing would go ignored as he became weaker and weaker.

'She chose to disregard his cries,' assistant state prosecutor Sara Miller said. 'She didn't need a scale to see his bones. She didn't need a scale to hear his cry.'

Even more shockingly, it was revealed that O'Leary had even been searching online for information on how long children could survive without eating.

'She knew what she needed to do,' added Florida prosecutor Francine Donnorummo during her closing arguments.

The evidence shown at trial proved the child died due to complications from severe malnutrition and dehydration.

Yet O'Leary's defence remained adamant that the mother didn't want her son to die.

'She would do anything to have Ezra back,' defence attorney Lee Hollander said. 'Not every tragic incident is intentional.'

After three-and-a-half hours of deliberation, the jury found O'Leary guilty of first-degree murder, aggravated child abuse, aggravated manslaughter, child abuse and two counts of child neglect in the death of Ezra.

On 29 August 2022, Sheila O'Leary, who was tried separately from her husband, was sentenced to life in prison.

In February 2023 Ryan O'Leary was sentenced to 60 years.

While nothing can be done to bring the tragic toddler back, justice has at least been seen to be done for little Ezra.

The kids were fed only fruit and veg

Sheila O'Leary protested her innocence

Ashley and Dwight had seemed such a happy couple

Looks deceiv

A grieving husband told one story, surveillance footage showed anoth

My wife… she's had an accident… I need an ambulance right now… She's injured. She's got a gunshot wound.'

When Dwight Luton first called police on 7 March 2017 to say his wife Ashley Balius had been shot, it appeared to have been a tragic mistake.

Officers arrived to find him standing by her SUV, parked in the driveway of their home, desperately trying to help his unresponsive spouse.

She was in the driver's seat, a gunshot wound to the right side of her head.

As Ashley was transported from their home in Riviera Beach, Florida, USA, to the nearby St Mary's Medical Center, Dwight explained that the 31-year-old had accidentally shot herself while removing a gun from her purse.

Devastatingly, her injuries were too severe, and she passed away just hours later.

Yet, as officials looked into her death, they discovered a suspicious lack of gunpowder stippling on her right hand, which would have been evident if she had discharged the gun.

There was also minimal blood on her right hand.

Had Ashley really shot herself?

The police weren't convinced and decided to look into her death more closely.

Returning to the house, officers found a surveillance camera, which had a clear view of the driveway.

But what would drive a man to kill his wife?

The recorded footage gave a far more chilling account of what had happened.

It showed Dwight getting out of the passenger seat of the car at 5.54pm, then reaching into a backpack before retrieving what appeared to be a gun.

He then leant back into the car and appeared to point the weapon.

As he did so, Ashley slumped forwards.

Dwight was seen rummaging through his backpack and appearing to wipe down both himself and the dashboard of the car.

He was then seen using his mobile phone, while holding a handgun, walking into the house and, after a minute, returning, having removed his shirt.

He appeared to administer aid to his wife seconds before officers arrived.

The evidence seemed overwhelming – but what would drive a man to kill his wife, the person he'd chosen to spend his life with?

The pair ran a business, Strictly Tactical Firearms, together.

Ashley had stood by Dwight after he was in a car crash and after his mother died. Why would he want her dead?

Yet there was something the detectives didn't know.

Ashley and Dwight's marriage had had its problems.

Dwight had been arrested on various occasions for suspected drug offences and driving under the influence.

Moreover, Ashley's cousin, Maegan Balius, would go on to allege that Dwight had abused Ashley physically, mentally and emotionally during their relationship.

Her twin sister, Amanda Smith, also said he'd hurt her before.

In April 2016, Dwight Luton had indeed been arrested on domestic violence charges, accusing

A hug for Ashley's mum Lisa

WORDS: SARAH WHITELEY. PHOTOS: ALAMY

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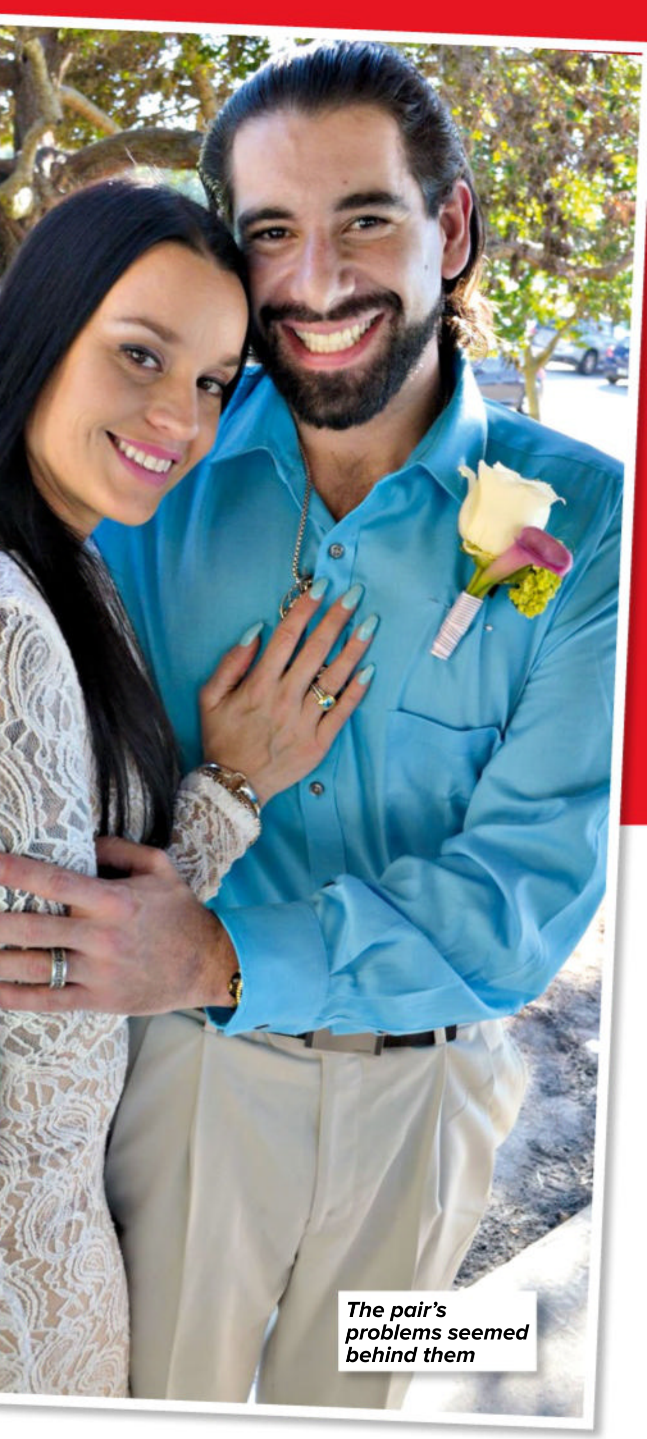


The pair's problems seemed behind them

An emotional Luton in court

him of beating Ashley while drunk.

But a no-contact order was later withdrawn and the charges dropped.

The pair seemingly put their problems behind them and six months later, they married.

Ashley posted a picture on social media of the couple cuddling, captioning it, *The day I married my best friend*.

Dwight was questioned and later charged with first-degree murder.

Investigations continued and, before the trial was due to start in May 2019, three days of hearings took place before Circuit Judge Laura Johnson.

The defence lawyers argued that the surveillance footage should not be shown in the trial, as officers entered the property before obtaining a search warrant and may have viewed or obtained the video before they were legally allowed to do so.

Judge Johnson denied this request and Ashley's family no doubt breathed a sigh of relief at the chance of receiving justice for their lost loved one.

Yet, as dozens of potential jurors lined up outside of the courthouse for what would have been the first day of the trial, Luton did an about-turn and pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of second-degree murder.

On 28 May 2019, he was sentenced to 40 years in prison for his heinous act.

He gave no explanation of what had happened or why he had killed his wife, simply telling Ashley's family he was 'terribly sorry' for what he had done.

But, devastated and distraught, they wouldn't accept his apology.

'I hope you suffer every day in jail like I suffer every day without my Ashley,' Lisa Balius, Ashley's mother, told him.

The grieving mother stated she couldn't understand why this had happened to her beautiful, talented, brave and family-oriented daughter.

Maegan was equally upset, saying she'd spent endless nights trying to think of what she'd say to the man who her family had welcomed in.

'Do you remember the family dinners, my birthday parties?' She asked him. 'You were part of our family. Now all I see you as is a murderer.'

Amanda could only hope that her sister's death wouldn't have been in vain and that it might help other people who suffered abuse at the hands of a partner.

'Domestic violence is real,' she said. 'She loved her husband, Dwight. And in return for her love for him, he murdered her.'

Distressing words that Dwight Luton will now have many years to think about in his cell…

Accused: Rothwell appears in court

Sins of the father

Falling pregnant cost Jennifer Rothwell her life...

As Beau Rothwell, 28, contemplated the future of his marriage of four years to his wife Jennifer, then aged 28, he tried to think practically.

Making a list of pros and cons, in July 2019, to figure out what to do.

The positive reasons he listed for leaving her included a 'better sex life', a 'fresh start' and the hope of 'more respect'.

But there were reasons to stay, too – such as 'have to move', 'half my money and assets' and 'disappointment from my family'.

Beau clearly wasn't a happy man at all – a situation made even more evident by the fact that he was having an affair.

But soon, Jennifer – a chemical engineer – was pregnant, and Beau wasn't smiling about it.

Looking for help, Jennifer went online, searching on Google for *what to do if your husband is upset you're pregnant*.

Then, on 11 November, when Jennifer was six-weeks pregnant, the couple got into a heated argument.

She wanted to know who her husband was cheating on her with.

But he refused to say.

Angrily, she told him to keep his 'mystery b***h'. Said that the baby she was carrying wasn't even his.

In a rage, Rothwell struck his wife over the head with a mallet and, as she stumbled away from him, he hit her again, killing Jennifer… and her unborn child.

Next, he dumped his wife's body about an hour's drive away from their home in Creve Coeur, Missouri.

Throwing away evidence in a skip, he used bleach to clean the blood-stained carpet back at their house.

The following evening, Beau Rothwell reported his wife missing.

He told the police that the last time he'd seen her was that morning, when she'd left for work.

Her colleagues were apparently concerned she hadn't shown up.

Jennifer's parked car was found near her home, her mobile phone left inside.

Playing the victim, Rothwell posted a plea on social media, appealing for information about his missing wife.

An unlikely source came forward – Rothwell's mistress

But he wouldn't let detectives search his home, or take a DNA swab.

The next day, investigators searched his bins, finding cleaning products, including rubber gloves. And a receipt for the cleaning items, dated the day before he'd called the police.

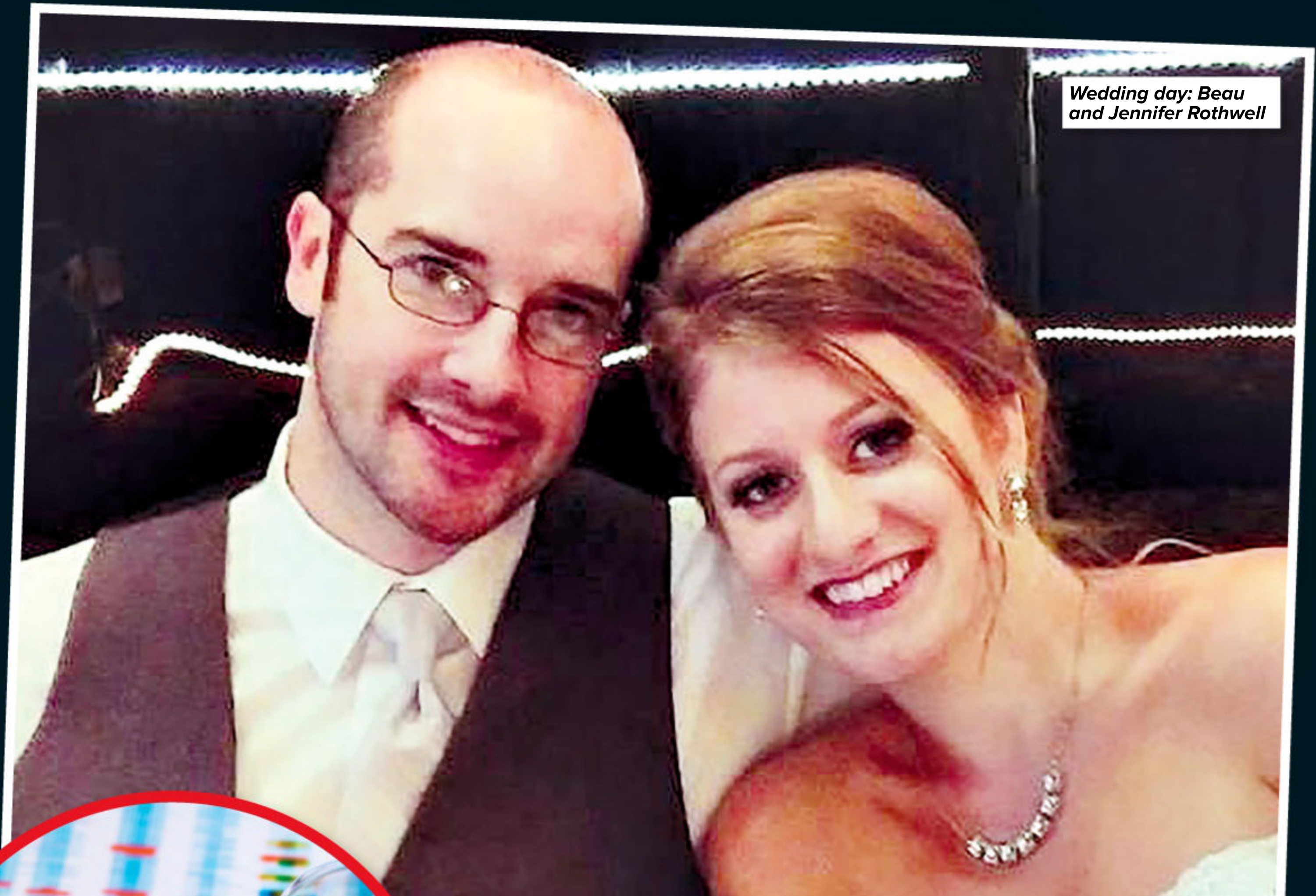
The day that he'd claimed to have been at home with his wife.

As the police put out missing-persons reports, and news of Jennifer's disappearance was shown across news channels, an unlikely source of information came forward – Rothwell's mistress.

Revealing details of their relationship, she showed the police text messages exchanged between them, in which Rothwell expressed his feelings about his wife's pregnancy.

Part of me wants this pregnancy not to work out, he'd written. *If there is a miscarriage or something, I'll leave her after that and be with you.*

When the police finally searched the Rothwells'



Wedding day: Beau and Jennifer Rothwell

DNA tests revealed vital evidence

home, the strong smell of bleach was hard to miss, as well as large red patches – blood stains – on the carpet.

Subsequent DNA tests showed that it was Jennifer's blood. And a paternity test confirmed the baby was in fact Rothwell's.

The evidence stacked against him, Rothwell was in a corner…

Six days after reporting his wife missing, he finally came clean.

Gave the police directions on where they could find his wife's body – referring to her as 'it'.

On 18 November, Jennifer Rothwell's lifeless body was found.

Naked, she lay in the foetal position, her head covered with a plastic bag.

Rothwell was arrested, charged with first-degree murder, tampering with physical evidence and abandonment of a corpse.

He was held behind bars, while he awaited trial.

In April 2022, 31-year-old Beau Rothwell faced his fate in court.

He admitted to killing his wife, but denied it had been premeditated murder.

Instead of murder, he sought the lesser conviction of manslaughter.

Rothwell took the stand, admitting that he was the one responsible for his wife's tragic end.

He'd gone into a 'red haze', he told the court.

'In the heat of everything, I hit her again,' he said. 'I believe I cracked her skull, she fell unconscious and fell down the stairs.'

But he hadn't planned to kill her, Rothwell said.

He explained that he'd got the idea of removing her clothes after watching TV crime shows.

His defence team argued that the attack had been accidental and asked jurors to acquit him of first-degree murder, and instead to find him guilty of manslaughter.

He'd been happy about the pregnancy, they said, and it was the fight that tipped him over the edge.

But the prosecution laid out all the evidence, including the texts he'd sent the other woman.

Rothwell was a meticulous planner, with only one goal in sight, they said.

He was upset about the pregnancy, wanted a future with his mistress.

Wanted his wife and unborn child out of the picture.

After three hours and 20 minutes of deliberation, the jury reached a verdict.

Beau Rothwell closed his eyes, tilted his head and exhaled as he was found guilty of first-degree murder as well as all of the other charges.

And, as Jennifer's family heard the verdict, many of them cried.

Beau Rothwell received the life sentence, with no chance of parole.

All Jennifer wanted was a husband who loved her, was loyal and wanted a future as a family.

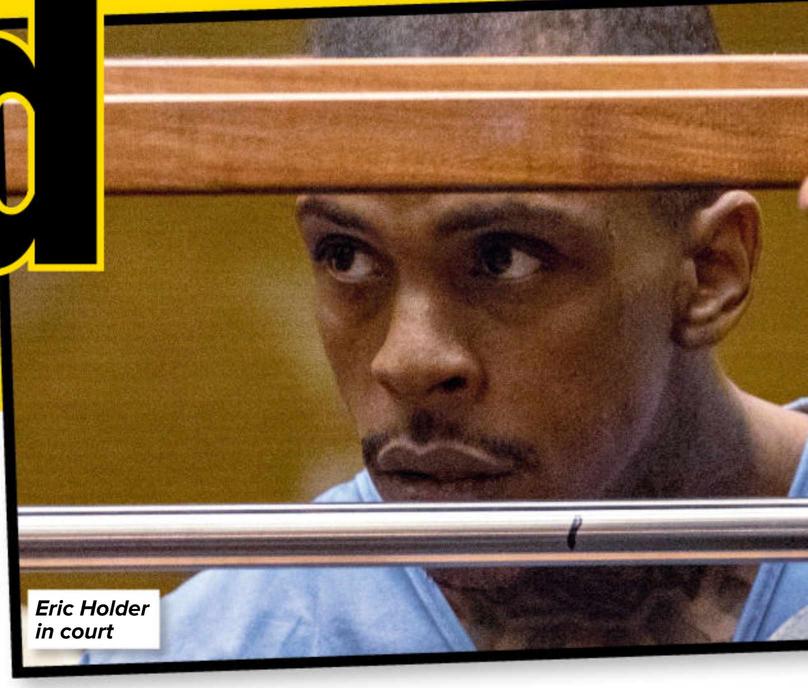
Instead, she suffered a violent end at the hands the man she should have been able to trust the most.

WORDS: MISHAAL KHAN. PHOTOS: TNS VIA GETTY, GETTY/WESTEND61

STALKED BY DEATH

Killed in co blood

A star rapper's past came back to haunt him



Eric Holder in court

Walking on stage, Grammy-nominated rapper Nipsey Hussle clutched the mic and began to rap. The audience, drawn in by his charismatic presence and powerful words, went wild.

It was February 2018, and Nipsey was opening the show at the Global Spin Awards in Los Angeles.

Nipsey, born Ermias Asghedom,was an established presence in the music industry – having been on the scene for over 10 years – and collaborated with some of the big artists like Drake and P Diddy.

Having grown up in one of Los Angeles' toughest neighbourhoods, Crenshaw District in the southern LA area, the rapper was known for his thought-provoking lyrics. Made no secret of his violent past – talking publicly about his long affiliation with the Rollin' 60s, an LA-area street gang.

But in 2017, after being signed to major record labels, the rapper distanced himself from the gang.

The father-of-two got involved in community activism, working to empower and employ underprivileged groups in inner-city Los Angeles, as well as opening a clothing store, Marathon Clothing.

In March 2019, Nipsey had recently released his major-label debut album, which earned him his first Grammy nomination.

Days later, he was outside his clothing store with close friend Herman Douglas, when acquaintance Eric Holder, a gang member, approached them.

As the pair chatted in the car park, they began to argue after Nipsey mentioned rumours that Eric was 'snitching' to the police.

Eric denied the rumours, saying that people were 'hatin' on him'.

The pair shook hands and Eric drove off only to return 10 minutes later.

Taking out his gun, he opened fire, shooting Nipsey at least 10 times.

'He shot me. He shot me,' Nipsey said, before collapsing to the ground.

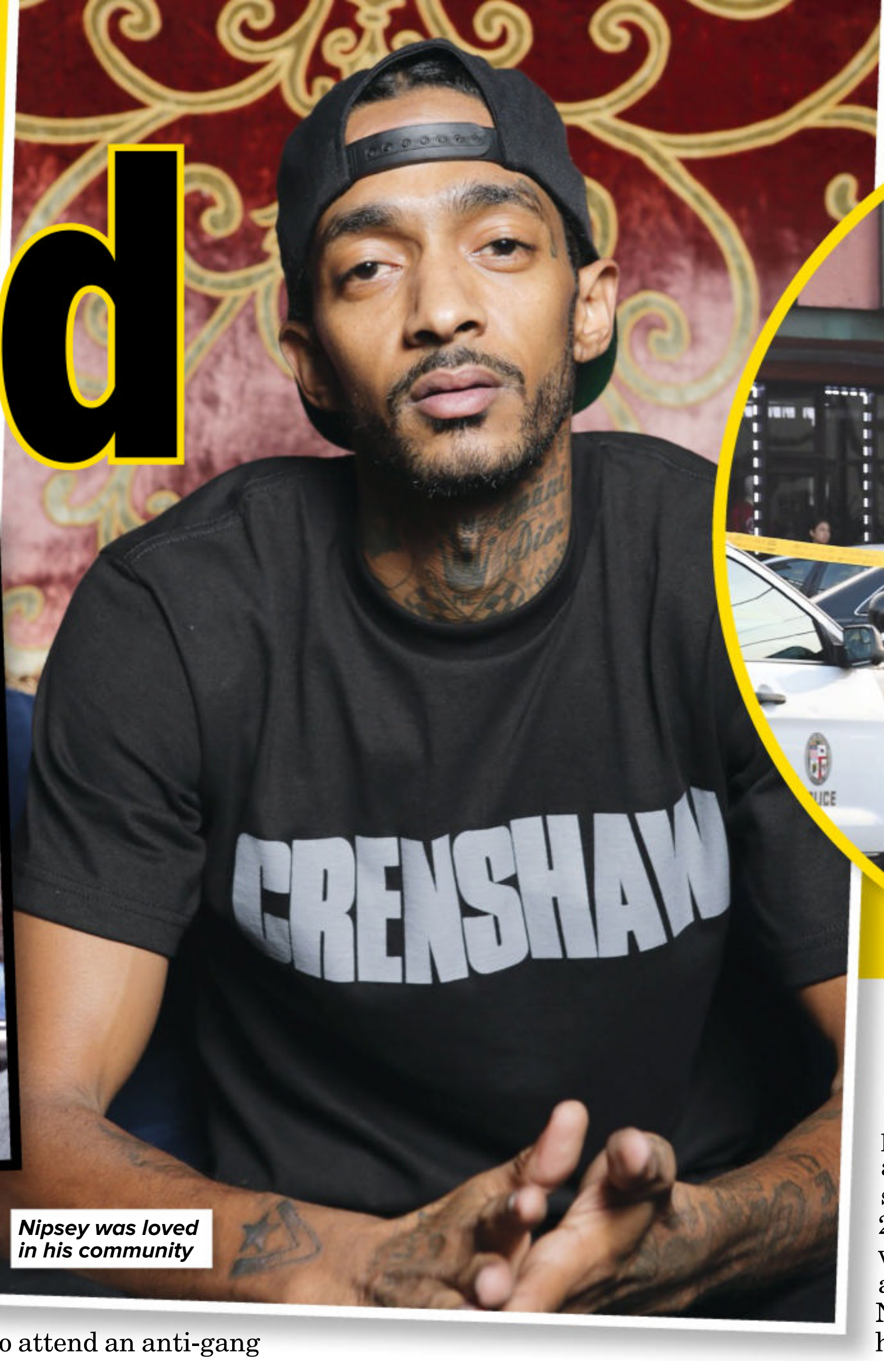
Nipsey was taken to a local hospital with gunshot wounds to his head and torso – where he eventually died of his injuries. He was just 33.

While early news reports suggested the murder was gang-related, the Los Angeles Police Department's investigation stated they didn't believe the argument or shooting was gang-related as there was no clear motive.

It also came out that Nipsey had been planning

Fans lined the streets for the funeral procession

ld



Nipsey was loved in his community

THE MARATHON
T
-Mobile-
Open

The car park where Nipsey was shot

to attend an anti-gang meeting the very day he was gunned down.

His death led to an online outpouring of grief and love from big names in the music industry and well-known celebrities. Former US president Barack Obama even sent a letter offering condolences to Hussle's family, commending a life well lived.

Days later, Eric Holder was arrested and charged with one count of murder, two counts of attempted murder, and one count of possession of a firearm by a felon.

In April 2019, fans and music industry elite attended the public memorial at the Staples Center, where Snoop Dogg and Stevie Wonder gave eulogies.

The procession afterwards saw over 21,000 fans walking alongside Nipsey's hearse during its 25-mile journey through the streets of south Los Angeles.

Three years after his death, Eric Holder's trial began.

After seeing overwhelming evidence, including video surveillance, which captured his arrival, the shooting and his departure, the jury agreed that Holder had planned the murder.

In July 2022, Eric Holder, 32, was found guilty of first-degree murder, as well as two counts of attempted voluntary manslaughter and assault with a firearm for shooting and wounding two other men that day.

In February 2023, he was sentenced to 60 years behind bars.

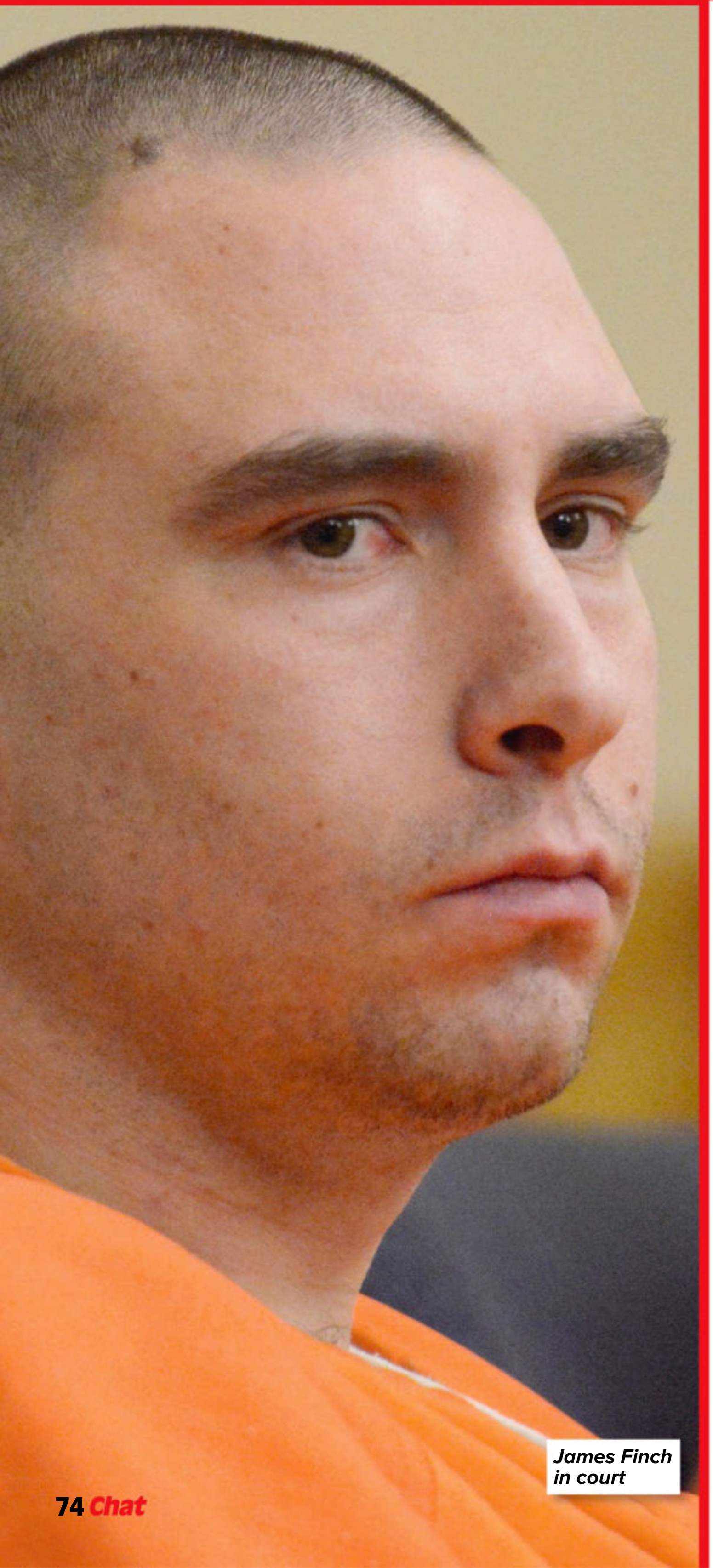
Showing the jury a photo of Nipsey crouching down to take a photo with a young child just moments before his death, Deputy District Attorney John McKinney said, 'He was a father, he was a son, he was a brother, he was a human being.'

WORDS: DONNA SMILEY. PHOTOS: GETTY

LEFT FOR DEAD

Grave dang

Who dug that deep hole in the garden – and why?



James Finch in court

Kathy Finch looked out at her little boy playing in the garden.

He was romping in the playhouse, their kitten Zamboni stretched out in the sun.

Such a happy home, she smiled to herself.

And James Finch was such a loved, only child.

Cherished, in fact, by his doting parents, even though he was a bit of a handful.

Kathy – a doctor – and husband David Finch from Albuquerque, New Mexico, first met when Kathy was at medical school.

She had asked him to dance, he memorised her phone number and soon it was love.

When James was born, their life seemed to be complete.

But something about their baby boy wasn't right.

It wasn't just that James didn't like to cuddle.

He was thrown out of two nurseries before he was even two years old.

Later James was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and struggled with school work.

When he hit his teens, Kathy had even more to worry about.

James started pulling vanishing acts, talking about his 'homies'.

He was taking drugs.

James became hooked on methamphetamine – crystal meth – and with the highs came the rages.

Kathy's once happy home began to erupt into violence. James would pound his fists, rant inches from her face.

Kathy was frightened of her own child.

By 16, he was turning up drunk to school. Desperate, Kathy signed James up for support groups, counselling.

She sent him to a drug rehab centre, sacrificing more than £60,000 from her and David's retirement fund to get him well.

But on his first night home, James got high and drunk – then was arrested for shoplifting.

Nothing had changed.

Finally, Kathy and David threw him out, no longer able to cope with his rages.

The once happy home began to erupt into violence

His meth habit. His fists.

By 2015, Kathy was 66 and David was 60 – and they lived in fear of their 24-year-old son.

They built a high fence around their property and installed an alarm. Put a deadlock on the bedroom door.

Kathy tried to alert the courts that James needed help with his mental health.

And despite one restraining order after another, he wouldn't leave his parents alone. He'd turn up to pick fights or attack them.

Then he was locked up for assaulting his girlfriend.

But in August 2015 James was released from

WORDS SHARON WRIGHT. PHOTOS: ALAMY

er

Mum Kathy – her life and health broken

jail.

Kathy returned home from work one day to find a big hole in the garden.

'It looks like a grave,' David said in disbelief.

They looked at each other in sheer terror. James was sending them a chilling message.

He wanted his mother and father dead.

A few days later, James was back. Just before 4am on 24 August, he broke into their house.

James stabbed David, then turned to Kathy, his face contorted with hate.

In his hand was her kitchen knife. He brought it down on the top of her head, then he was on her, stabbing her face and arms. Pain ripped through her, as she toppled backwards.

David was shouting, using his final moments to try to save her.

'Get out, get out before he gets you!' he screamed.

But it was too late.

Kathy lay sprawled on her back, choking on blood.

Blood bubbling from the stab wounds in her mouth, pouring down her throat, as she fought for air.

I'm going to die, too… Kathy thought.

Then there were sirens – blue lights and police officers everywhere.

She was being bundled into an ambulance, her face ripped to pieces.

David was dead.

The police followed a trail of bloody footprints out to the back porch, where James Finch was hiding under a table.

He was naked, except for his socks, and drenched in blood, claiming that three masked men had made him do it.

Kathy was rushed to hospital where surgeons fought to save her life.

But there was no miracle recovery for Kathy.

She was permanently scarred by around 40 stab wounds to her face, mouth and tongue.

Kathy was scarred by around 40 stab wounds

She needed tubes to eat and swallow and had to learn how to talk again, walk again.

She lost her job as a doctor – she lost the house.

In March 2017 James Finch, 26, pleaded no contest to charges of second-degree murder, attempted murder and lesser charges, and was sentenced to 27 years in prison.

By now, Kathy was 68 and hadn't seen her son since he'd butchered her and killed his father.

Now she had something to say through painfully slurred speech.

'Twenty-seven years in prison for you should let me live out the remainder of my natural life without fear for my safety,' she said.

'I grieve the loss of you. The cherished child who became a troubled son, and gave your life away to drugs.'

Addressing the court before his sentence, James told Kathy he was sorry.

As he was led away, it was something for Kathy to cling to. A hint of remorse.

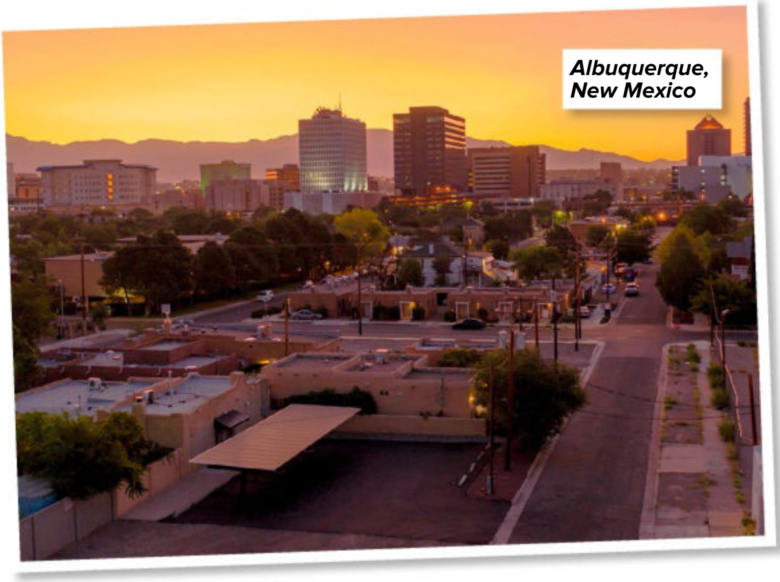
Outside, she struggled to get the words out.

'I was afraid he was lost forever,' she managed.

'There's a glimmer of hope now.'

But there was no hope for her loving husband David.

And Kathy was left to somehow carry on, her heart and body broken by the little boy she'd adored.


Albuquerque, New Mexico

THE WRONG WIFE

Murder, she wrote

Accused of killing her husband, she appeared to have written the guide

Daniel's workplace was the scene of a gruesome mystery

As a romantic suspense writer, I spend a lot of time thinking about murder… After all, if the murder is supposed to set me free, I certainly don't want to spend any time in jail. And let me say clearly for the record, I don't like jumpsuits and orange isn't my colour…

The words, seemingly tongue in cheek, were taken from a 2011 essay titled *How To Murder Your Husband* by romance writer Nancy Crampton Brophy.

Knives, she wrote, were *personal and close up. Blood everywhere*, while poison, *considered a woman's weapon*, was too easy to trace.

But the thing I know about murder is that every one of us have it in him/her when pushed far enough.

The words were witty, written, it seemed, to amuse and entertain her readers.

But they would take on a far more sinister meaning when Nancy's husband of 27 years, Daniel Brophy, was found shot dead at the Oregon Culinary Institute, where he worked as a cookery instructor, on 2 June 2018.

Students arrived for their class and found a real-life horror scene – their teacher on the floor, bleeding from two bullet holes.

When police arrived, it appeared the chef had been shot first in the back, as he filled buckets with water and ice for his students at the sink, then again in the chest at point-blank range.

There was no weapon to be seen, and the 63-year-old's wallet was with him, still containing his cash and cards.

There were no signs of a robbery or forced entry.

The school had no security cameras and, as it was early morning, he was the only one in the institute… apart from his murderer.

Daniel was a quiet, unassuming man, well liked at work, who took care of his turkeys and chickens and vegetable patch at home in Portland, Oregon, and liked to treat his wife to extravagant home-cooked meals. Who would want him dead?

For months, it remained a mystery. Then the police stumbled across traffic-camera footage of Nancy's minivan passing near the Institute at the time of the shooting.

And the plot only thickened when they also discovered that the pair had life-insurance policies as part of their retirement plan that, along with other assets, would pay out $1.5million to Nancy in the event of Daniel's death.

But despite this savvy financial planning, the couple's other money matters weren't in quite as good a situation.

In recent years, they had spent their savings and ended up in a considerable amount of debt.

And when detectives discovered that Nancy had bought a gun and an assembly kit for a 'ghost gun' – an unregistered and untraceable firearm – online, they were convinced they'd found their killer.

So, in September 2018, three months after Daniel's murder, Nancy was arrested.

Immediately, attention was drawn back to her earlier essay. Had her words held a

Was Nancy's testimony fact or fiction?

WORDS: SARAH WHITELEY. PHOTOS: ALAMY, SHUTTERSTOCK

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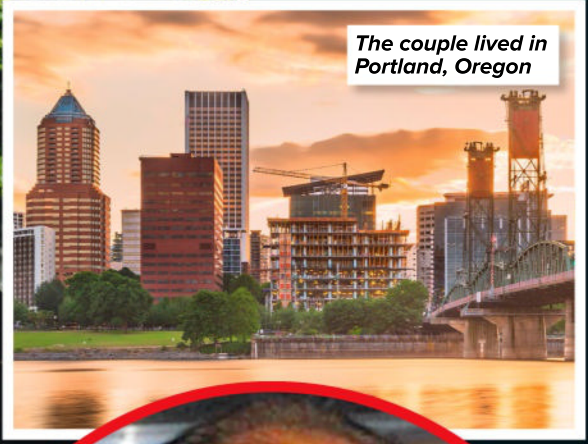

The couple lived in Portland, Oregon

Did Daniel's money trouble hold a clue?

darker undertone all along?

Rather than discussing a plot, had she actually been creating a plan?

When her case went to trial in 2022, the judge ruled that the essay was not admissible as evidence, as it had been written so many years previously, and as part of a writing seminar.

Despite the overwhelming evidence, Nancy pleaded not guilty and her defence attorney, Lisa Maxfield, argued that the police's case was circumstantial.

She told the court that the couple were happy and in love. They'd been on recent romantic getaways and even had another one planned, to Mount Rushmore, that summer.

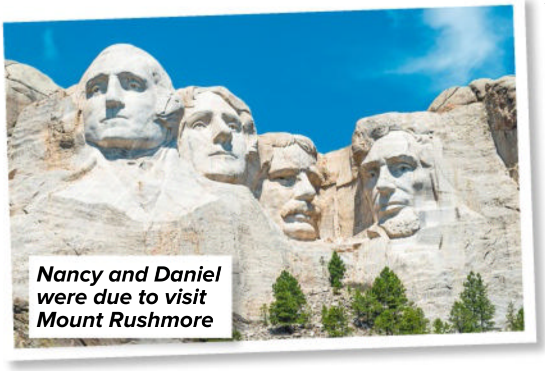
When called to the stand, Nancy tried to explain that she had bought the 'ghost gun' as part of the research for her next novel, and that the couple's money troubles weren't as bad as they seemed.

But she couldn't explain why her minivan had been at the murder scene.

She could only say she had a memory blank from the morning of her husband's death.

The prosecution painted a far more damning picture of the struggling self-published author, who they argued had bigger dreams than Dan was providing.

'This wasn't working for Nancy,' said Multnomah County senior deputy district attorney Shawn Overstreet. 'It isn't just about money. It's about the lifestyle that Dan couldn't give to her.'


Nancy and Daniel were due to visit Mount Rushmore

He told the court that, in a scene worthy of one of her novels, Nancy had followed her husband to work, then shot him in cold blood.

She left before anyone saw, and disposed of her weapon.

It would have worked perfectly – had she not been caught on camera.

There were no other suspects, no one else with a motive as compelling as Nancy's.

She could only say she had a memory blank

Dan Brophy was worth almost $1.5m to Nancy Brophy if he was dead, and worth a life of financial hardship if he stayed alive, the prosecution argued in court documents. *Nancy Brophy planned and carried out what she believed was the perfect murder.*

A murder that she believed would free her from the grips of financial despair.

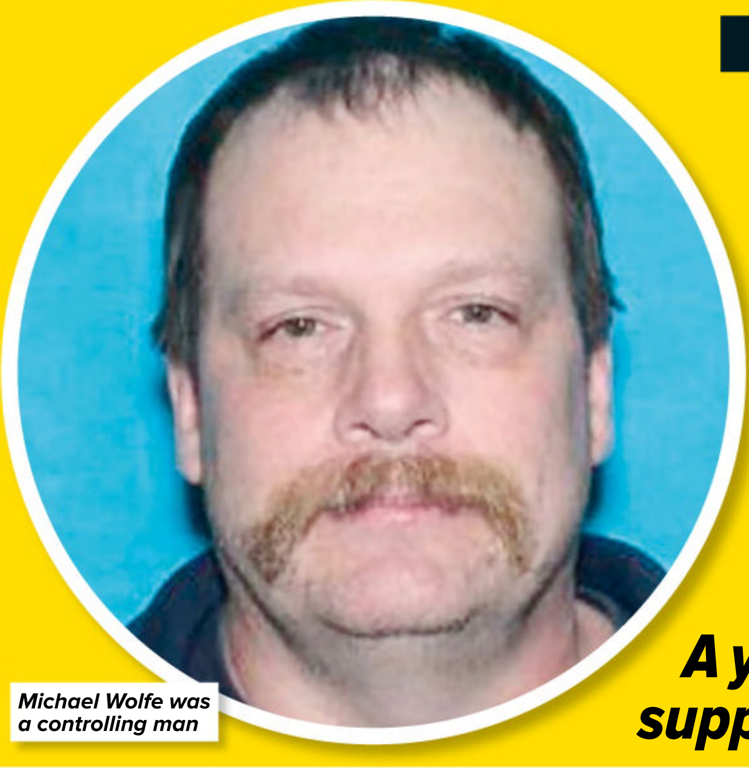
The jury agreed and in May 2022, after a seven-week trial, found 71-year-old Crampton Brophy guilty of the second-degree murder of her husband.

A month later, she was sentenced to life in prison, with the possibility of parole after 25 years.

'You opted to lie, cheat, steal, defraud and ultimately kill the man that was your biggest fan,' said Nathaniel Stillwater, Dan's son from a previous marriage. 'You were – to borrow from your catalogue – the wrong wife.'

Crampton Brophy may have written the book – or, rather, the essay – on the subject of killing your husband, but she won't get a happy ending.

MONEY OVER MORALS


Michael Wolfe was a controlling man

The m mistr

A young mum claimed child support – and paid with her life

When Karissa Fretwell found out she was pregnant, she should have been happy.

After she had lost her father in 2007, at the age of 14, her life had hit a downward spiral.

She'd turned to drink and drugs.

But Karissa worked hard to turn things around.

Her teachers nurtured her, she finished school and decided to help other troubled teens.

Dreamed of becoming a teacher herself.

She enrolled at university, took various jobs at fast-food restaurants to get by.

Started working at a sandwich shop in Oregon, USA, as a delivery driver.

Almost every day, the same man called, asking for Karissa to deliver his lunch to a nearby steel factory.

Michael Wolfe was in his 40s, more than twice her age.

But he had taken a shine to Karissa.

They began a relationship.

In 2015, they went off for a weekend by the sea.

Upon returning, Karissa, then 21, discovered that she was pregnant.

But just three days earlier, she'd found out that Michael was married.

Her happy moment was shattered as Karissa realised she hadn't been Michael's girlfriend.

She'd been his mistress.

She knew Michael wouldn't support her, so she told him she didn't expect anything from him.

In response, Michael offered to pay for her to have an abortion.

Karissa was determined that her son wouldn't go without

But there was no doubt in Karissa's mind… she was keeping the baby.

Alone, she prepared for the impending arrival of her little one.

Gathered second-hand clothes and toys.

And on 18 February 2016, her son William – Billy – was born.

My darling boy, I love you, she wrote on Facebook.

She'd post pictures of him at the playground, smiling and laughing.

Her pride and joy.

She found a flat, and a job as a security guard.

Determined Billy would never go without, Karissa gave him the main bedroom and bought him a car-shaped bed, while she slept in the living room.

Although she rarely had time to sleep.

Juggling 16-hour shifts with studying and being a single mum was a struggle.

And childcare costs were crippling.

With almost a third of her earnings going on babysitting fees, Karissa decided she would have to rethink her previous decision and start claiming child support.

Little Billy was the light of his mum's life

In May 2018, she filed a claim against Michael.

A paternity test confirmed that he was Billy's biological father.

And on 15 April 2019, he was ordered to start paying around £750 a month in child support.

The court order was signed off by a judge on 10 May 2019.

Karina must have felt a weight lifted from her shoulders.

But four days later, she failed to show up for her shift.

She'd last been seen when she'd collected Billy from his babysitter the afternoon before.

Now, both mother and son had vanished.

A family member turned up at her home, found her car outside, the front door unlocked and the TV on…

But there was no sign of Karissa or Billy.

Karissa's glasses lay on the side – she couldn't see without them.

Her bank card had also been left behind.

Worry turned to

WORDS: FRANCESCA WOODSTOCK. PHOTOS: YAMHILL COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, SALEM POLICE DEPARTMENT, ALAMY

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Sheriff Tim Svenson shows the location of Karissa's body

Karissa had so much to live for

dread, and Karissa and Billy were reported missing.

Friends told investigators about Karissa's relationship with Billy's father.

How she'd taken him to court.

Under questioning, Michael admitted they'd had an intimate relationship four years earlier.

But he claimed not to have seen her since the hearing.

Yet CCTV footage had captured him leaving work on the day she and Billy had gone missing.

A cell tower placed his mobile device in the vicinity of Karissa's apartment at around 9pm – five hours after she was last seen alive.

But a search of his property revealed nothing.

On 27 May 2019, friends and family held a vigil for the mum and her young son.

'She was pretty amazing,' her classmate, Mykeal Moats, said.

'We just want to build some hope. We should be getting loud and making sure nobody stops looking for her.'

Her last Facebook post said her son was her world

But others shared concerns about Karissa's relationship with Michael.

'He was so controlling,' said Darleen Sells, a friend from school.

Bethany Brown worked with Karissa at the sandwich shop and told how Michael would make inappropriate comments to Karissa.

After Billy was born, Bethany said Karissa had told Michael she wanted her son to know his daddy.

'He told Karissa not to ruin his life,' Bethany said. 'He said he couldn't afford child support.'

On 28 May 2019, Michael Wolfe, then 52, was arrested and charged with murder and kidnapping.

Meanwhile, the search for Karissa and Billy continued.

More than 40 people searched for them, dead or alive.

Until 15 June 2019, when two bodies were discovered, buried in woodland less than 20 miles from the home of Michael Wolfe.

An autopsy determined that Karissa had been shot in the back of the head.

A gun was found nearby.

The cause of Billy's death was undetermined.

While Wolfe was awaiting trial, his wife of 29 years filed for divorce.

Her husband was facing the death penalty for murdering his mistress and secret son.

In September 2020, the divorce was finalised.

And in June 2022, Michael Wolfe, then 55, pleaded guilty to the murder of 25-year-old Karissa Fretwell and their 3-year-old son Billy.

In July 2022, Wolfe was sentenced to life in prison.

But no punishment will bring back the young mum and her son.

Becoming a mother was the best thing that ever happened to Karissa.

My son is my world, her last Facebook post read.

But Michael Wolfe stole them both away.

SADISTIC ENSLAVER

A savage mistress

What evil was happening behind the mansion's lavish exterior?

At 1140 Royal Street stands an imposing building in New Orleans' French Quarter.

The three-storey neoclassical mansion boasts ornamental wrap-around wrought iron railings and intricate carvings.

Back in the 1830s, when it was home to Madame Marie LaLaurie and her third husband, twinkling chandeliers were visible through the many windows.

A fitting home for a well-to-do couple at the time.

Born to affluent parents in 1787, Marie had a privileged start in life.

Though widowed twice before marrying a wealthy doctor, Leonard Louis Nicolas LaLaurie, she'd been blessed with five children and lived an enviable life, throwing lavish parties.

Beautiful, courteous, well respected and rich, Marie enjoyed a place at the very top of high society.

But, aside from Marie, her husband and children, there were others who lived at 1140 Royal Street.

The family's enslaved staff.

It wasn't uncommon for moneyed families to keep enslaved people for domestic duties in Louisiana in the era.

But there was something different about the inhabitants of 1140 Royal Street's slave quarters.

They appeared unkempt, and sickly.

Horrifically, funeral registers showed that over a four-year period, 12 slaves had died at Royal Street.

And there were whispers that Marie, who ran the household, kept her 70-year-old cook chained to the stove and had some secret slaves, kept for her husband to practise voodoo medicine on.

Some even said she punished her own daughters, whipping them if they ever tried to help the slaves.

While plenty of rumours stirred, some things were reported on record.

One enslaved man, so afraid of the cruelty he'd face at the hands of Madame LaLaurie, threw himself out of a third-storey window to spare his fate.

After, the window in question was sealed shut with concrete.

Another time, a 12-year-old enslaved girl, called Lia, was put to work brushing Madame LaLaurie's hair.

But tugging the hairbrush a little too hard, she irritated her captor, who flew into a fit of rage.

Police found the old cook chained to the stove

The girl was punished, whipped, and could only think of one way out.

Climbing out of the window onto the roof, she too leapt to her death.

Eyewitnesses allegedly saw Madame LaLaurie burying the girl, and the police had no choice but to investigate.

Fining the socialite $300, forcing her to sell nine of her slaves.

But soon, she just bought them back, as authorities turned a blind eye.

After Lia's death, the local community was on edge, beginning to believe there may have been truth to all the hearsay.

But while they started to question what might be going on behind closed doors, the reality they soon discovered was far more harrowing than they could have believed…

In April 1834, a fire broke out at 1140 Royal Street.

Neighbours and locals rushed to help, doing what they could to try and put out the fire.

And when police and fire marshals arrived, they found the old cook, chained to the stove.

She had started the fire, she admitted.

Had tried to end her life, rather than be taken to the torture room.

Located at the top of the grand house, all she knew about it was that whenever a slave went up there, they never came back down.

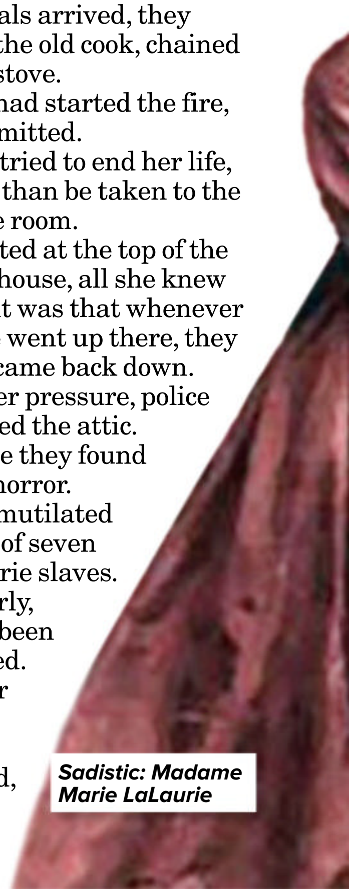
Under pressure, police searched the attic.

There they found sheer horror.

The mutilated bodies of seven LaLaurie slaves.

Clearly, they'd been tortured.

Their bodies were bruised,



Sadistic: Madame Marie LaLaurie

WORDS: MISHAAL KHAN. PHOTOS: ALAMY, GETTY

B. STEVENS
GENTS FURNISHING GOODS
CLOTHING
HAVANA CIGARS

It was a shocking time in New Orleans

beaten, bloodied, some with their eyes gouged out and their mouths sewn shut.

Records showed that one woman's arms had been amputated, her skin peeled off.

Another resembled a crab, after her bones had been broken then reset.

Some had their stomachs cut open, their intestines wrapped around their bodies.

And there was no question about who had committed the crimes.

With her husband often absent, the culprit had to be Madame Marie LaLaurie.

Hearing of the discovery, locals were disgusted.

And when the surviving slaves were freed, an angry mob stormed the house.

Smashing windows, tearing down doors, leaving little more than the four exterior walls.

And as investigators kept searching for answers, more dead bodies were found – including a child's – buried in the grounds of the property.

Somehow, amid the chaos, Madame LaLaurie and her family had managed to escape long before anyone noticed.

Some say she fled to Paris.

But even though her daughter later claimed to receive letters from her, no one else ever saw them again.

Legend has it that she may have returned to New Orleans, changing her name, continuing her torturous ways.

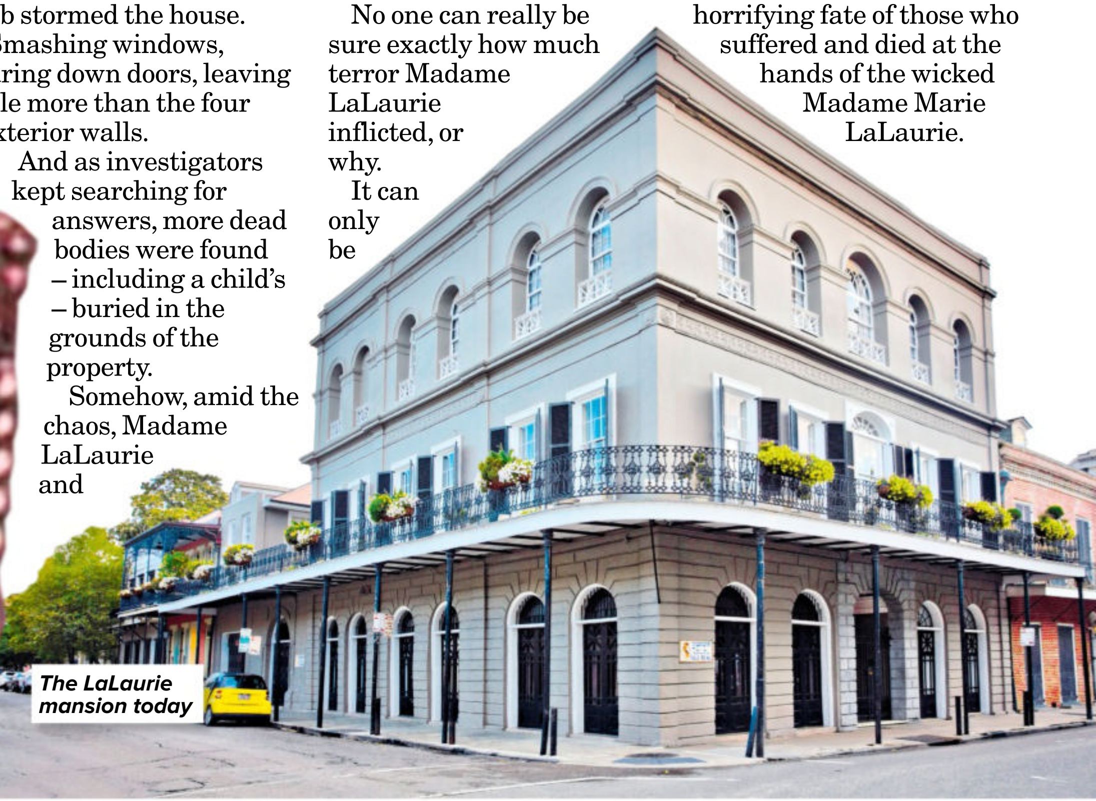
No one can really be sure exactly how much terror Madame LaLaurie inflicted, or why.

It can only be assumed she acted out of pure sadistic pleasure.

No wonder that after that fateful night in 1834, she became known as the Savage Mistress of New Orleans.

The ruined mansion was eventually rebuilt and today it still stands at 1140 Royal Street.

Still as imposing and handsome as it ever was, it acts as a reminder of the horrifying fate of those who suffered and died at the hands of the wicked Madame Marie LaLaurie.



The LaLaurie mansion today

KILLED IN COLD BLOOD

Death on a dirt road

Almost two decades on from the double murder, the battle for justice continued

WORDS: LOUISE BATY. PHOTOS: ALAMY

Killer Deparvine is no longer on death row

It was a crisp autumn day when Karla Van Dusen phoned her mother for the last time.

Karla, 49, told her mum that she was on the road in Tampa, Florida.

She was driving her Jeep Cherokee behind her husband Richard, 58, who was at the wheel of the couple's 1971 red Chevrolet Cheyenne pickup truck.

Richard had been in the process of selling the vintage truck.

He'd listed it for sale in the local paper for $13,700.

Now, on the phone, Karla told her mum that Richard had a potential buyer. From the sounds of it, the sale was going ahead.

Great news.

The Van Dusens led busy lives. They were loving parents. Richard would organise family picnics and loved working on cars.

Karla was a fun mum who played piano, sang in a church choir and performed as a clown for hospital patients.

But all that was about to end in the most horrific way.

The day after Karla had called her mother, on 26 November 2003, cops found two bodies lying face-down on a dirt road.

A man and a woman.

They had both been shot in the head and the woman had also been stabbed twice in the chest.

It was Karla and Richard Van Dusen.

The couple's abandoned Cherokee, the front seats stained with blood, was found near the crime scene.

The vintage Chevrolet was missing.

The Van Dusens' violent deaths left their loved ones reeling and their children distraught.

Who had done this?

It was three months before cops made an arrest, in January 2004.

Investigators had located the vintage Chevrolet outside an apartment building in St Petersburgh, leading them to a suspect named William Deparvine.

He'd previously spent time behind bars for vehicle theft and arson.

Now phone records and DNA evidence linked him to the Van Dusen crime scene.

He was charged with double murder.

At his trial in 2005, Deparvine didn't deny purchasing the Van Dusens' truck – a bill of sale bore his name – but he denied killing them.

He claimed the last time he had seen them

State Attorneys Michelle Doherty and Lindsey Hodges

Murdered: Richard and Karla Van Dusen

was when they delivered the van to his apartment.

After a lengthy trial, the jury found Deparvine guilty of first-degree murder and carjacking, and of shooting the couple at close range so that he didn't have to pay for the truck.

As he was sentenced to death, relatives of the victims hugged in court as the judge told Deparvine that he would pay for his crimes with his life.

For almost two decades, Deparvine was confined to a single cell at Union Correctional Institution, home of Florida's death row.

He was waiting for his day of reckoning.

But then, in 2016, the situation changed.

Florida had been one of the only states in the USA allowing a jury to recommend a death penalty if the verdict was less than unanimous. A majority of seven to five was all that was required.

That changed when the US Supreme Court ordered Florida's death penalty law to be revised to require a jury's verdict to be unanimous in order to issue the death penalty.

Deparvine had been sentenced to death by a jury of eight to four.

Not unanimous.

This made him eligible for resentencing.

And so, in March 2022 – 17 years after his murder trial – William Deparvine took his place in a Florida court room once more.

While the original guilty verdict was not in question, the death sentence was – and that was what the jury would be deliberating on.

Almost two decades had passed, and the bespectacled killer was now an old man, wearing earphones to listen to proceedings because he was hard of hearing.

This time around, though, there was a different judge, a different jury.

However, when the details of Deparvine's crime were rehashed in court, they were no less shocking than they had been at his original trial.

With some witnesses from the first trial no longer alive, lawyers had to rely on transcripts of their testimonies along with the detailed evidence from two decades earlier.

'This wasn't done because the defendant was angry or disliked the Van Dusens,' Assistant State Attorney Michelle Doherty told the court. 'This was done solely to steal their truck.'

Doherty told how Deparvine had even tried to frame another man, leaving a stolen driver's licence belonging to his neighbour near the couple's abandoned Jeep.

However, now-retired investigators told the court how they'd discovered Deparvine's DNA inside the vehicle.

The jury also heard that prior to his life of crime, Deparvine had once had a promising future. He was a bookish man who'd graduated from university, married his high-school sweetheart and raised a family while attending law school.

Yet his life had veered completely off the tracks, culminating in the horrific murder of the Van Dusens.

Deparvine had once had a promising future

During the hearing, the couple's now grown-up children begged the jury to condemn their parents' killer to death.

'Nothing can truly put into words the impact my mother's death had on my life,' Karla Van Dusen's son James Myers told the court. 'When she was taken from me… my entire soul was crushed beyond repair.'

On the opposing side were Deparvine's daughters, who asked for the jury to save their dad's life so that they could continue to visit him in prison, with his daughter Kelly Cousineau saying, 'I love my father.'

After a three-week court hearing, the jury rejected a new death sentence, with the judge immediately imposing two new sentences of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.

It means that the double murderer will still, one day, die behind bars.

But the shockwaves from that one dreadful day 20 years ago still cause agony for the two families.

TERROR IN TOKYO

Beware th Rat M

How could four little girls vanish int

Tsutomu Miyazaki in custody

WORDS: DONNA SMILEY. PHOTOS: ALAMY, GETTY, SHUTTERSTOCK

Walking out of her house without a care in the world, Mari Konno, then 4, was excited to meet her friend and spend the afternoon playing.

It was August 1988, in Saitama, Japan, and Mari's family were used to her spending the afternoons with other children.

When she didn't return home as planned, her family called the police, but an extensive search revealed no sign of Mari.

Days later, her family received a phone call.

'There are devils about,' the man said, before hanging up.

Six weeks later, another little girl, Masami Yoshizawa, 7, went missing, followed by another girl, Erika Namba, 4, two months later.

Soon after Erika had vanished, her little body was found in a wooded area, some 30 miles from her home.

Her hands and feet had been tied with rope and she'd been strangled.

Days later, her family received a chilling letter, saying, *Erika. Cold. Cough. Throat. Rest. Death*.

Terrified that a serial killer was on the loose, people began to wonder about the fate of the other two missing girls.

Could they have all been killed by the same person?

Six months after Mari's disappearance, her dad received a horrifying package and handed it over to the police.

They found ashes, fragments of bones, 10 small teeth and photos of a child's clothes, along with a letter, saying, *Mari. Bones. Cremated. Investigate. Prove*.

Later, Mari's dad received a horrifying package

Tests showed that the remains were Mari's.

In June the following year, yet another child, 5-year-old Ayako Nomoto, disappeared on the way to a park.

Her family's fears were confirmed when her body was discovered a week later.

Only her torso remained.

At first, police were baffled, but in July an arrest was finally made.

A man called Tsutomu Miyazaki, 26.

A little girl's dad had accosted him for taking naked pictures of his daughter at a park.

After searching his home, police discovered pictures and videos of his victims.

All of the missing girls had died at his hands.

Eventually, Miyazaki confesseed to murdering all four girls, shocking police with his depraved accounts of what he did to them.

The killer had abducted Mari in his car, taking her to the outskirts of the city, where he strangled her before sexually abusing her dead body.

Shortly afterwards, he took his next victim Masami to the same place, where he subjected her to the same fate as Mari before dumping her body close to Mari's.

Next, he took Erika to a car park where he took naked pictures of her before killing her and leaving her body on display in the car

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lan

o thin air?

Mari Konno (left) and Erika Namba

park.

Most disturbing of all is his confession of his killing of Ayako.

He hid her torso in a graveyard and her head up in the hills.

During his trial, Miyazaki refused to take responsibility for his actions.

He claimed they were acts of kindness – even seemed proud of his heinous crimes.

Argued that his alter ego the 'Rat Man' had forced him to murder the girls.

The jury heard how the killer had suffered a traumatic childhood.

He was the product of incest between his father and his eldest sister.

Born with deformed hands, which he was incessantly bullied for.

From a young age, his perverted tendencies were clear.

He'd been caught spying on his sister in the shower.

He'd then viciously attacked her and his mother when he was confronted.

Miyazaki claimed insanity, but the jury saw through his lies and he was sentenced to death in April 1997.

In June 2008, Miyazaki was hanged for his crimes.

But his death cannot bring back the lives of the four innocent children he so brutally snatched away.

Miyazaki buried some remains

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FORGOTTEN FRENZY?

Horror in t wheelie b

He looked like any man taking out the rubbish, but the truth was

On the morning of 9 May 2021, 20-year-old Agnes Akom set off from her flat in Cricklewood.

She sent a text to her partner, Peter, telling him she was on her way to work as a coffin maker.

Then, she sent a message to a man she knew, Neculai Paizan, 63, and another man she worked with.

Agnes booked a cab, and waited for it outside a coffee shop, but instead it was Paizan who turned up.

Agnes got into his car and the pair drove off together.

She was never seen alive again.

And with no activity on her social media, something seemed off.

On 18 May, authorities appealed to the public about Agnes' whereabouts.

Put out a description. She was 5ft 5in, with blonde hair.

Likely to have been wearing a white fur coat, blue ripped jeans and pink trainers.

And as the police investigated, they found shocking CCTV footage.

Showing Agnes with Neculai, entering the grotty shipping container he lived in.

But there was no footage of her leaving…

Paizan was arrested on suspicion of murder and false imprisonment.

At first, he claimed he and Agnes had a relationship.

Then described her as 'a daughter' to him.

But as they investigated, police found blood, matching Agnes' DNA, on the spine of a bible in his home.

Found her white coat dumped in a skip, traces of her blood in Neculai's car.

On 23 May, Neculai was charged with murdering the young woman.

An accusation he strongly denied.

But despite being confident in who killed Agnes, police still had no idea how she might have died.

Or where her body was.

Until 14 June, when her remains were found two miles from her home, at Neasden Recreation Ground.

Decomposed, her head wrapped in a plastic bag, a cord around her neck.

Post mortem results showed Agnes had died as a result of blunt-force trauma, struck over the head at least 20 times.

The power tool, an electric jigsaw, used to bludgeon her to death was found in a nearby skip, her hair stuck to it.

In custody, Neculai awaited trial.

'No! I am not guilty!' he shouted in August, as he entered his plea.

And on trial in July 2022, he maintained his innocence.

Took the stand at the Old Bailey himself, describing his version of the events.

Over 12 months, he'd met Agnes more than 50 times.

Sometimes she'd strip, dance, play games and tell him about all the other men she'd had relationships with, he said.

Often, she'd ask for money.

Even on the day she'd disappeared, they'd met so he could give her £20.

And before going inside his home, they'd sat in his car for 18 minutes.

Then, Neculai gave his version of what happened next.

Agnes had been on her phone, and he'd started feeling ill.

'I started to feel a bit unwell, my mouth was dry and I was not feeling right,' he told the court. 'I realised that I had been poisoned, drugged.'

Neculai said he thought it was the iced coffee that

Neculai Paizan told a bizarre story

The site of a grim discovery

WORDS: MISHAAL KHAN. PHOTOS: ALAMY, SHUTTERSTOCK

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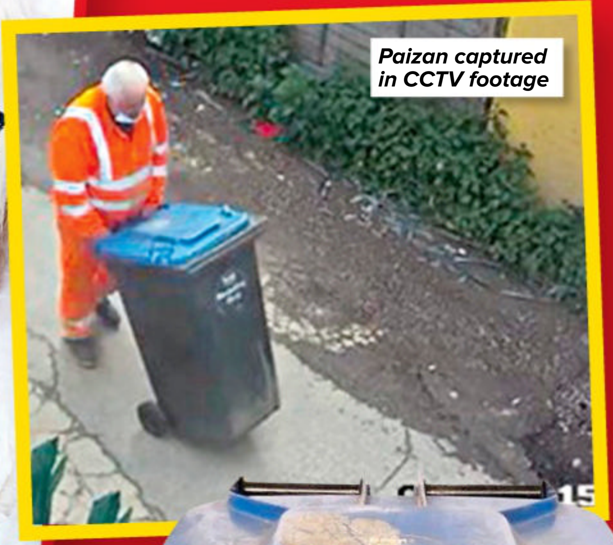
Agnes fell victim to a predator



Paizan captured in CCTV footage

Brent Council
Recycling Only
recycle for Brent

This bin held a terrible secret

Agnes often drank.

'She drank some of it and then she handed it to me and said, "You drink it, I've had enough,"' he said.

Then, he described how he started to feel sick as he headed into the shipping container to get some more cash for Agnes.

'All of a sudden, I felt like a wave of darkness and I could not walk. I sat down in the first room,' he said.

Neculai said he managed to stand, making his way to the section of the container where his bed was.

'It seemed to me that she was undressed and I fell down,' he said.

He said he remembered the feeling of someone pushing a bottle, filled with liquid, into his mouth.

And that when he opened his eyes, he tried to push Agnes away, push away whatever it was that she was trying to shove into his mouth.

His two front teeth breaking in the process.

Neculai said that in his state of confusion and sickness, he left the container, needing air.

And when he'd returned, he'd found Agnes, curled up, head down.

'I got scared and I entered in a state of panic. What was going on? How did she end up like this? I cannot say what happened,' he said.

Neculai said he never called emergency services – no paramedics or police – because he believed she was already dead.

Feared police wouldn't believe him.

'I did not know what to do, how to go about things,' he said. 'I tried to take her to the park, put her in a good place.'

But the prosecution pushed back.

Showed damning CCTV footage.

'The doors close behind him. That is the last time that Agnes is seen alive on CCTV,' said prosecution lawyer Jacob Hallam.

But half an hour later, footage showed Neculai leaving the container.

He headed to an outdoor tap, washed off blood stains.

He went to an outdoor tap and washed off blood stains

Then he took a number of items from the container to the boot of his car…

Including Agnes' white coat and pink shoes.

Further footage showed him dragging a wheelie bin to his car.

An innocent scene, on appearance.

But inside the bin was Agnes' body.

Kept overnight in his car until the next morning, when he buried her in a shallow grave, under logs at Neasden Recreation Ground.

It took the jury barely an hour to reach their verdict.

In July 2022, Neculai Paizan, a 64-year-old father of four, was found guilty of killing Agnes Akom.

Sentenced to life, with a minimum term of 22 years.

As he handed him his punishment, Judge Richard Marks QC said, 'It is clear on your lengthy evidence that you remain in a complete state of denial as to what you did in that frenzy of violence that took away that young girl's life at the age of 20.'

And Agnes' heartbroken partner, Peter, described the huge loss he felt, saying, 'She was my love, the mother of my son, my partner, and my best friend.'

A DATE WITH DEATH

Fatal attra

He was a man who had everything and lost it all with one wic

When Marietta Cordero Birbilis needed help navigating her tricky divorce, she knew where to go.

She asked her lawyer, James Bottomley.

And it wasn't just advice that James offered.

Soon, he and Marietta, a nurse, embarked on an affair.

And while her marriage was coming to an end, James still had a wife of more than two decades, and twin daughters.

But that didn't deter him and soon, strong feelings developed.

James even asked Marietta to marry him, despite the fact they were both still legally wed to other people.

Naturally, trying to juggle two different lives and relationships, trying to keep a part of his world a secret, took a toll on James.

As he continued to feel the strain, his law business started to suffer too.

Eventually, James was ready to leave his family and start a new life with his mistress.

But when he came clean to his wife, it was all too much for her to bear.

She developed a severe medical condition in the aftermath, and James knew that any plan or chance to leave her had been thwarted.

James Bottomley was desperate, in despair, as his professional and personal lives were in tatters.

The final straw was when he learnt Marietta had given up on him for good.

She'd started dating another man.

For James, who had been ready to give everything up to be with her, it was a punch to the gut.

His ego bruised, pride knocked, he couldn't handle the rejection.

James admitted feeling insanely jealous

Then, in February 2000, angered by Marietta's refusal to go on a date with him, he decided to pay her a visit, armed with a gun.

He would make her feel sorry for him, he thought, by threatening to shoot himself.

But it wasn't James who ended up dead that day.

It was Marietta.

Shot five times at close range, her body lay in the entrance to her home.

She was 46 years old.

At the scene, witnessing the devastation play out, was the 63-year-old man Marietta had started seeing.

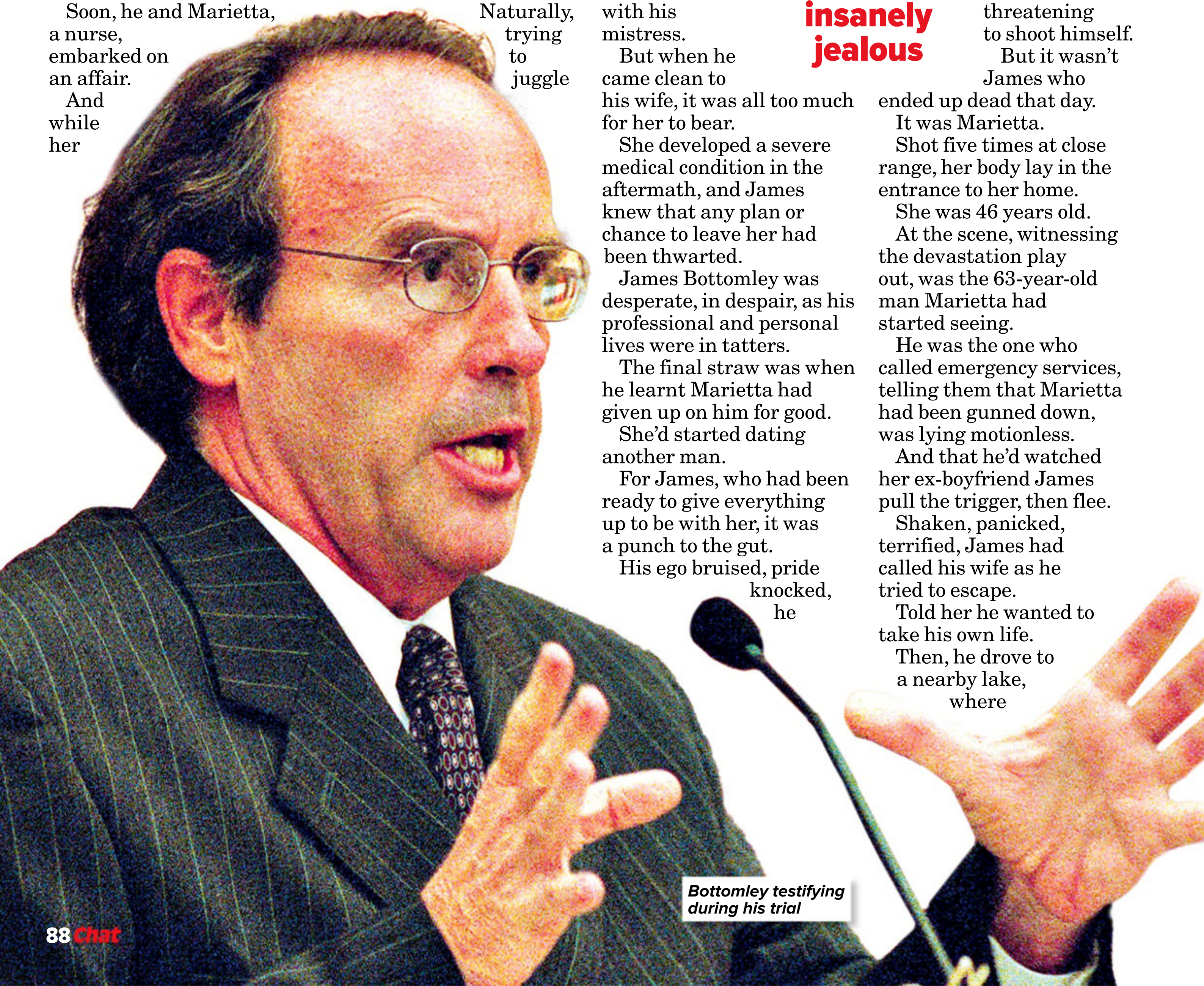
He was the one who called emergency services, telling them that Marietta had been gunned down, was lying motionless.

And that he'd watched her ex-boyfriend James pull the trigger, then flee.

Shaken, panicked, terrified, James had called his wife as he tried to escape.

Told her he wanted to take his own life.

Then, he drove to a nearby lake, where



Bottomley testifying during his trial

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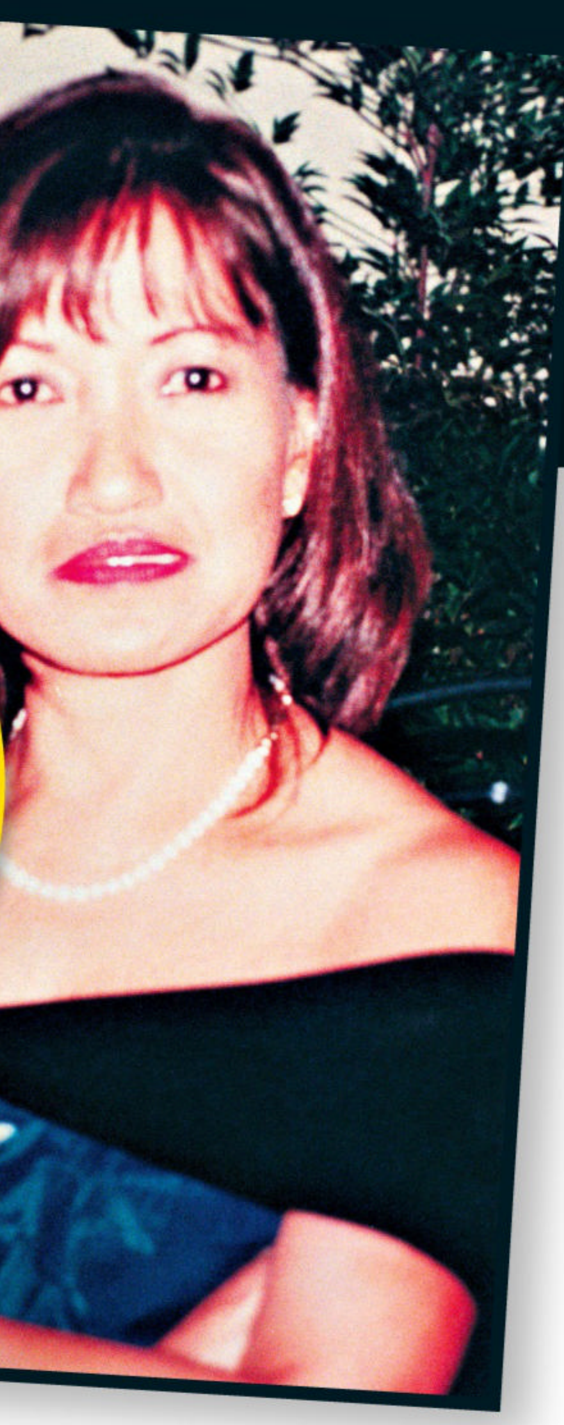
Police attend the scene of the crime



Marietta was trying to move on with her life

police found him.

In a stand-off with officers, gun in hand, he threatened to shoot.

But they managed to convince him to stand down.

And as they took him in for questioning, James confessed to it all.

He admitted to the affair, to falling in love with Marietta, and feeling insanely jealous when things hadn't worked out.

He'd never planned to kill her, he insisted, but as she tried to wrestle the gun from him, she'd been fatally shot.

With a full confession, police had all they needed.

James Bottomley was arrested, charged with murdering the woman he'd once loved.

In August that year, he stood trial, not denying that he was responsible for Marietta's death, but claiming that he'd only done it in the heat of passion.

Nevertheless, the jury decided that James Bottomley, 52, was guilty of second-degree murder.

As he awaited sentencing, Bottomley tried to have his conviction reduced, from second-degree murder to involuntary manslaughter.

He attempted to get a retrial, blaming incompetent lawyers.

Both requests were refused by the judge and in June 2001, Bottomley faced sentencing.

Before handing down Bottomley's punishment, Superior Court Judge John Einhorn addressed Marietta's family, expressing his sorrow and sympathy.

Described Bottomley as an embarrassment to the legal profession and the court.

Said he was unable to explain how the defendant had gone from a devoted father and successful lawyer to a killer.

Then it was Bottomley's chance to speak, to apologise to Marietta's family, as his own family looked on, emotional.

'I have been in agony with remorse and suffering every day of the last 16 months, and I should be… Marietta did not deserve to die,' he said.

He wrote a 300-page confession to gain sympathy

Then, he was sentenced to 40 years behind bars.

Two months later, Bottomley officially resigned from the Bar.

And a year after he stood trial, Marietta's mother and siblings filed a wrongful-death lawsuit against him, managing to win an undisclosed amount of money in damages.

No amount of money could bring back their daughter and sister, who was described by loved ones as lively and warm-hearted.

In 2016, Bottomley published a 300-page confession, hoping to share his point of view and gain some sympathy.

But he remains in prison in America.

It's hard to understand why James Bottomley, a man with everything, did what he did, became the person that he did.

But no explanation could bring back the life he so cruelly took away.

WORDS: MISHAAL KHAN. PHOTOS: ALAMY

KILLER SON

Love you to death

She fought to save her son but paid a terrible price

Christian was very disturbed

WORDS: SARAH WHITELEY. PHOTOS: GETTY, ALAMY

Maria Suarez Cassagne was a devoted mother of three.

But as her kids grew up, she found that most of her attention was spent on her middle son Christian.

He'd been a happy, affectionate child.

But by the time he was 18, things had started to fall apart.

He couldn't keep a job. He didn't want to drive. He stopped showering.

Convinced that his mum and his sister Maria Jose were watching him, he started isolating himself from his family and said that he heard voices from underneath his bed at night.

Maria did everything she could for her boy Christian.

She contacted mental-health agencies and professionals in the hope of finding help.

One diagnosed him with schizophrenia, another with bipolar and a third suggested depression and psychotic behaviour.

Yet, as they struggled to settle on a diagnosis, Christian's mental health became worse.

In one shocking episode, he skinned and buried the family cat.

Still he refused to take his medication.

Maria attempted to secretly crush his tablets and sprinkle them over his food, but when he saw her, he accused her of trying to poison him.

His uncle Mario Suarez would find him chanting in the back garden with a Bible, and Christian would tell him how he loved to talk to the stars.

He got into more and more trouble, being arrested for loitering and prowling, resisting an officer without violence and disorderly conduct.

Maria was growing desperately concerned for her son.

She even had him temporarily held under the Baker Act, which allows for the involuntary institutionalisation of people suspected to be a danger to themselves or others because of mental illness.

Yet, nothing seemed to be working.

She was so fearful, she slept with a knife under her pillow

By now, Maria wouldn't allow her daughter Maria Jose to be left alone with Christian.

She herself was so fearful, she was sleeping with a kitchen knife under her pillow.

Over Christmas 2014, however, Maria no doubt tried to put these worries out of her head.

Her eldest son Mario was home from Virginia for the holidays, and she was delighted to see him.

On New Year's Eve, Maria and Christian went out to the garage as Maria needed to get some boxes to store the Christmas decorations.

When Mario, who was reading, heard thumps

Maria tried to get help for Christian

Storing decorations led to carnage

a few minutes later, he presumed it was them working.

Meanwhile, outside, Veronica Allen, a friend of Maria's, had arrived and saw Christian mopping up what she thought was red paint.

She tried to call and text Maria, who was due to cut her hair, but Maria didn't answer so, eventually, Veronica left.

After 20 minutes, Mario realised the house had fallen quiet. Too quiet.

So he went out to the garage to see what was happening with his mum and brother.

And he was greeted with a gruesome sight straight out of a nightmare.

The pooling red liquid wasn't paint.

It was blood.

An axe was leaning against the wall.

Following the blood, a horrified Mario walked towards a bin.

Inside, he found his mother's decapitated head.

'Oh my God,' he shouted down the phone as he called for help. 'I can't believe it!'

The city of Oldsmar, where the family lived

Christian had fled on his bike, but a few blocks away he stopped at an open garage, where four neighbours were playing poker, and asked them for a beer.

They gave him a bottle of water instead and, noticing blood on his ankles, they waited until he had ridden off and then called the police.

The Sheriff said it was one of the worst cases they'd seen

At 8pm, officers spotted Christian and, although he tried to cycle past them, he fell off his bike.

At the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office Dunedin station, Christian explained he was mad that his mum kept 'nagging' him about chores, and that she preferred his brother to him.

He'd spent the past two days plotting her murder and, having lured her into the garage, had swung the axe at her like a baseball bat.

'I finished her,' he said simply.

'I don't think it gets much worse than that,' said the Sheriff of Pinellas County, Bob Gualtieri. 'The whole circumstance is probably one of the worst, certainly, that we've ever seen, with a decapitation and the head stuck in a garbage can. It's terrible.

'In a very calm, cool way, he explained what he did, why he did it and what happened, and by talking to him, you wouldn't know he had any mental illness… that's very scary.'

For three years after having pleaded guilty, Gomez remained in a state psychiatric hospital. But he was declared competent to stand trial in July 2018, and accepted a plea deal that effectively works out as a 25-year sentence followed by 10 years of probation and treatment.

A sentence that both troubles and terrifies his family.

'He doesn't need to be in jail, he needs to be in a mental hospital,' says his uncle Mario Suarez.

'I wish that he could be sedated forever and not hurt anybody else. Because what he did was crazy. Nobody kills their mom and takes her head.

'People shoot other people, they stab other people. This was different. This was evil.'

SHOT IN THE DARK

Predator turns prey

She went on holiday to kill – but came home in an urn

Millionaires Bianca and Lawrence 'Larry' Rudolph spent their fortune doing something many find repugnant.

Travelling the world, hunting big game.

The pair posed proudly for pictures, holding their guns over their fallen kill, smiling in satisfaction.

The couple had met at the University of Pittsburgh, where Larry had studied dentistry.

They married in 1982 and went on to have two children together.

Larry made millions through his dentist practice, which, over the years, expanded into a franchise over five locations, and he became a regular on local TV, advertising his services.

The two appeared to have everything anyone could possibly want.

So when Bianca dreamt of hunting a leopard, the pair set off to Zambia's Kafue National Park in October 2016.

Yet the trip passed without Bianca fulfilling that dream, and in the early hours of 11 October, it was time to go home.

But through the silence of the Zambian night, a shot rang out from their cabin.

The game scout on the safari, Spencer Kakoma, ran there and discovered Bianca lying on the floor, a gunshot wound to her heart and a 12-gauge Browning shotgun – one of the two firearms the couple had brought away with them – by her side.

Larry explained that he'd been in the bathroom while Bianca was packing their cases.

She must have shot herself accidentally while putting the gun away, he said.

The Zambian authorities came to the same decision and Bianca's body was moved to a funeral home, until she was quickly cremated before Larry flew home – holding an urn of ashes, rather than his wife's hand.

In 2017, he collected nearly $5million in seven life-insurance claims.

Yet, when a friend of Bianca's heard that she had been cremated, her suspicions were aroused.

She called the FBI, telling them she believed that 'cremation was against Bianca's wishes because Bianca was a strict Catholic'.

So why would her husband have been so quick to organise one?

Bianca's friend had an answer for that, too.

She stated that there was a lot more to the

Kafue National Park in Zambia

Larry and Bianca had a troubled marriage

The couple on one of their big-game hunts

couple's relationship than initially met the eye.

She told the FBI that Larry was having an affair, and that he 'had been verbally abusive in the past and that the two had fights about money'.

Yet for them, she said, separation wasn't an option.

'Larry is never going to divorce her because he doesn't want to lose his money and she's never going to divorce him because of her Catholicism.'

That single phone call was enough to spark suspicion and open a case.

And after a lengthy investigation in both the US and Zambia, Larry was arrested in December 2021 and charged with foreign murder and mail fraud.

The dentist pleaded not guilty and, flanked by the couple's two children, went to a Denver court house to protest his innocence.

His defence argued valiantly that yes, the defendant had been having an affair with Lori Milliron – an employee at his dental practice – for 20 years, but Bianca had known about it and the two had an open relationship.

They also stressed that, with Larry's dental firm being worth more than $15million, he had no financial motive to kill his wife.

The insurance money had, instead, gone into a trust fund for their children.

'I did not kill my wife, I could not murder my wife,' Rudolph insisted to the jury, in a cracking voice. 'I would not murder my wife.'

But, unbeknownst to Larry, an American Embassy official, a former Marine with decades of weapons experience, had examined Bianca's body in the funeral home.

The evidence showed that Bianca was shot from two to three and a half feet away.

The FBI also carried out a 'reach test', to see if it was physically possible for Bianca to have accidentally shot herself.

The conclusion? It wasn't.

The prosecution claimed that Larry had been overheard shouting at Lori, 'I killed my f***ing wife for you!' in a Phoenix steakhouse in 2020, when he learnt of the FBI investigation.

Larry countered this, saying the pair had been arguing about something else and he'd actually said, 'They're saying I killed my f***ing wife for you!'

A former employee told the FBI that Lori had given Larry an ultimatum to leave his wife just months before Bianca's death, and prosecutors stated that he planned to carry out the murder when Bianca asked for more power over their finances, and demanded he fire Lori.

Larry was caught between two women for decades

Had Larry, caught between two women for decades, finally made a brutal, bloody choice? Had he killed his wife and cashed in on her life insurance to start again with his mistress?

The jury thought so. After a three-week trial, 67-year-old Rudolph was found guilty of murder and of mail fraud, for cashing in on Bianca's life-insurance claims.

Milliron was found guilty of being an accessory after the fact to murder, obstruction of a grand jury and two counts of perjury.

Rudolph now faces the death penalty.

But whether the man who killed not only innocent animals but also his wife will pay the ultimate price for his heinous crime, only time will tell.

WORDS: SARAH WHITELEY. PHOTO: ALAMY

ACT OF PURE EVIL

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Ali loaded his car with gas canisters

On a normal day, on a normal street, one man unleashed carnage

As the afternoon blended into evening, students walking home from school bustled by and shoppers and workers hopped on and off trams.

It was 9 November 2018, just another Friday evening on a busy Melbourne street.

Nestled in the central banking district, cafes, restaurants and bars lined the pavement ready to provide coffee, a quick meal or an after-work drink.

A normal scene of city life.

But suddenly, an explosion blasted out of nowhere.

A blue car was on fire, smoke billowing into the air.

Seeing the flames, retired businessman and former firefighter Rod Patterson, then 58, ran towards the burning vehicle to help the driver, Hassan Khalif Shire Ali, 30.

Believed the car had crashed and caught alight before bursting into flames.

Only, as he reached him, Ali lunged forward.

Stretched out his arm and viciously slashed a 22cm hunting knife at Rod's head.

Leaving Rod with blood pouring from his wound, the driver dashed away, knife still in hand.

Looking for his next victim…

Within seconds, Sisto Malaspina, a 74-year-old Melbourne local who owned a popular restaurant on the street, was confronted by Ali.

Overpowered, Sisto was repeatedly stabbed.

Left bleeding on the floor, a passer-by knelt down to help him.

But she was too late.

All she could do was cradle his head in her lap and comfort him as he slipped away.

'I'm so sorry,' she said to him, as she stroked his hair, stunned.

Hearing the commotion and speaking into his radio, a 24-year-old shop security guard stepped on to the now panicked street.

Looking towards the burning car, he turned to see Ali racing towards him.

With the knife still in his hands, he repeatedly stabbed the security guard in his upper body.

Trying to protect himself, the security guard fell back, but Ali kept on slashing.

All three of the devastating attacks had happened in just 19 seconds.

Two police officers who happened to be driving down Bourke Street at the time heard the explosion and saw the car on fire.

The security guard fell back, but Ali kept on slashing

As they raced towards the scene of the attack, Ali approached their car.

One of the officers opened his door, Ali reached in and started punching him before he could step out.

Forcing his way out of the car, the officer tried to restrain Ali but he managed to get free and took off down the street before stopping.

Spotting the blade in Ali's hand, the officer pulled out his gun.

The two men looked at one another before Ali charged at the officer.

Watching the events unfold, the second officer pulled out his weapon.

But as Ali came within half a metre of his target, a gun fired.

The first officer had squeezed the trigger to stop Ali as he lunged towards him, hitting him in the abdomen.

Falling back, Ali hit the floor before trying to scramble to his feet.

He struggled against the officers before he was tasered by members of the Critical Incident Response Team, who had just arrived at the scene.

Acting Sergeant Heffernan applied pressure to Ali's bullet wound, but the shot proved fatal.

Ali repeated the phrase *Allahu akbar*, God is great in Arabic, before he died.

As the short but devastating attack was pieced together by police, they found that Ali had

WORDS: ASHLEIGH PAGE. PHOTOS: ALAMY, GETTY

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Sisto Malaspina was stabbed to death

PELLEGRINI'S BAR
68
66

Floral tributes laid at Sisto's restaurant

loaded his car with gas canisters and religious papers before driving into the city centre.

Igniting the vehicle, he then attacked passers-by with a knife.

He killed Sisto Malaspina and severely injured Rod Patterson, leaving him needing 120 internal and external stitches, and the young security guard – who both later recovered in hospital.

At the time of the attack, Ali was on bail and a national security person of interest.

Police had even planned to arrest him the day after the fatal attack over a number of violent incidents.

They were too late.

People who knew Ali said he was plagued with mental health issues.

Believed he was being chased by people with spears.

Was this an act of terrorism or the actions of a man who desperately needed help?

In June 2021, an inquest found that Ali's attack was a premeditated act of terrorism.

But Judge John Cain couldn't rule out that Ali was suffering from mental illness at the time of the attack because there was not enough evidence.

'While the acts of one man were intended to intimidate and harm, the acts of many others demonstrated the opposite,' Judge Cain said.

He also praised the victims for their courage.

After sitting in court to hear the coroner's findings, Rod Patterson said the memory of the attack was something he thought about every day.

'Sleeping is something I'd love to experience again. It's been tough,' he said.

Explained he felt no ill will towards Ali's family.

'There's no room for hate in our heart if we want to be a great community,' he said. 'Let's remove hate and work as one.'

Former Australian PM Scott Morrison lays a tribute

DEVILISH DUO

A match m in hell

They were kindred spirits, both evil to the core

Inside the pair's house of horrors

Growing up, Charles Ng was a troubled boy.

He was born in 1960 to a wealthy family in Hong Kong.

His father Kenneth was a businessman who tried to keep his son on the straight and narrow by beating him with a stick.

Charles was continually being expelled from school.

By the age of 15, he'd already been arrested for shoplifting.

As a result, his father sent him to stay with relatives in the UK and Charles was enrolled at a boarding school in Yorkshire.

But after he was caught stealing from other students, Charles was expelled again.

In 1978, he moved to the USA and joined the Marines, but he was arrested by military police for stealing weapons.

Escaping custody, he fled to California.

Charles had spent his entire life as a loner, but it was there that he met a friend – Leonard Lake.

Leonard had also been in the US Marines, but was discharged after suffering a mental breakdown.

By 1983, Leonard had become obsessed with the idea that the world was on the brink of nuclear war.

In preparation, he'd built an underground bunker on a remote compound surrounded by a fence.

Leonard told Charles he could stay at the bunker.

The secret bunker had a locked room, like a cell

It had three rooms.

But two were hidden behind a secret doorway.

And as they scratched the surface of their friendship, they discovered that they were kindred spirits.

Evil to the core.

Over the next two years, 12 people went missing across Northern California.

The underground bunker became Ng and Lake's sick sex dungeon, where they tortured, raped and murdered.

But hiding in their underground dungeon meant their crimes went unpunished.

Until June 1985, when Charles' old habit came back to haunt him, and he was arrested for shoplifting yet again.

He was caught stealing a vice at a hardware store.

Leonard stepped in to try and save his friend, offered to pay for the item while Charles slipped away.

But a search of the vehicle Leonard had been driving aroused suspicion.

The car belonged to a missing person.

Leonard was arrested too.

Their sick game was up.

But Leonard Lake, then 39, had long been prepared for this moment.

At the police station, he retrieved a cyanide pill he'd sewn into the lapel of his jacket.

Swallowing the pill, he was dead within minutes.

Police followed the trail from the stolen car, eventually navigating their way to a cabin in the woods.

And the secret bunker.

Inside, they found a locked room, furnished like a cell.

An investigation was launched, but nothing could have prepared police for what they'd find.

Shallow graves, piles of charred bones, blood-stained tools and buried teeth lay in the grounds of the property.

Inside, there was recording equipment and videotapes.

And a 250-page diary that documented the pair's evil antics.

Meanwhile, Charles had escaped, fleeing to Canada.

Within weeks, he was arrested.

But it took another six years for him to be extradited back to the United States, and even longer for him to stand trial.

Eventually, in September 1998, Charles Ng, then 38, appeared in court, accused of killing six men, three women and two baby boys.

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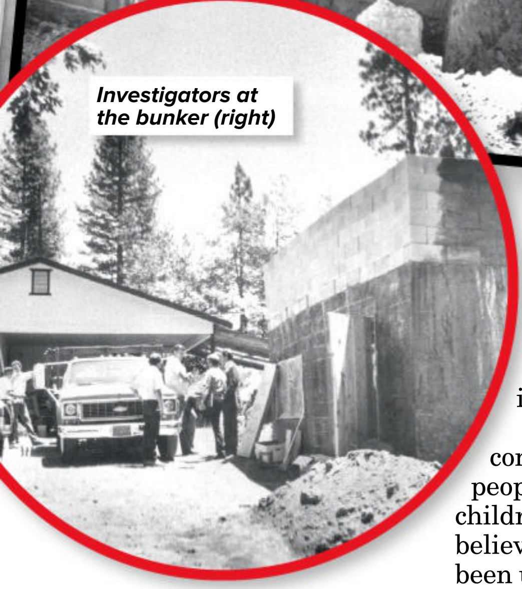
Terrible discoveries lay behind this door

Charles Ng during his trial



Investigators at the bunker (right)

Representing himself, Ng claimed to have had no role in the killings, and that Lake was the mastermind behind the operation.

But the evidence against him was overwhelming.

The jury was shown video footage retrieved from the bunker, showing women being used as sex slaves.

Tormented by both Ng and Lake, forced to plead for their lives at knifepoint.

'You can scream like the rest of them, but it won't do you any good,' Ng was captured saying.

Forensics revealed that victims had been bound, gagged and shot.

Some had been dismembered to the point that they were impossible to identify.

Ultimately, Ng was convicted of killing 11 people, including two children, but investigators believe there could have been up to 25 victims.

At the sentencing, his father Kenneth Ng, then 69, apologised to the families of the victims.

'Our family feels very shameful, and we feel very sorry,' he said.

He pleaded with the jury to spare his son, urging them to sentence him to life in prison.

But thejury couldn't be swayed.

In April 1999, Ng was sentenced to death and in July 2022, the supreme court upheld the conviction and death penalty.

Charles Ng remains on death row.

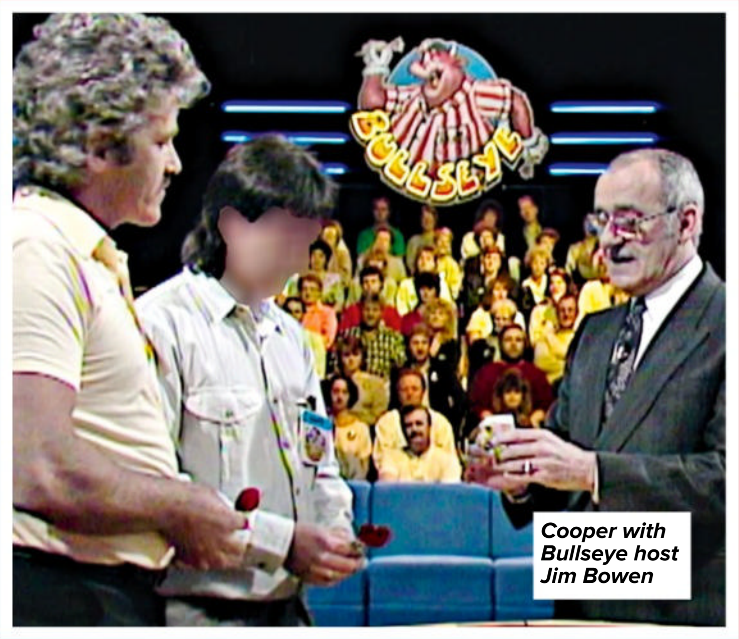
Around four decades since he and Leonard Lake carried out their abhorrent crimes, authorities are still trying to identify some victims.

Bones and other human remains have been exhumed from a crypt, where they have been kept since the conviction.

It is hoped that modern technology and the development of DNA analysis could help reveal who they were, so they can finally be laid to rest.

Leonard Lake was a monster

WORDS: FRANCESCA WOODSTOCK. PHOTOS: GETTY, SHUTTERSTOCK, BETTMANN ARCHIVE



Cooper with Bullseye host Jim Bowen

Dead targ

A game show led murder cops straight to the bullseye

With a wink, an animated bull in a red and white striped top threw a dart and hit the bullseye.

'Nothing beats a bit of Bully!' TV presenter Jim Bowen said, sauntering on screen to applause.

It was May 1989, and *Bullseye* was one of the most popular shows on television in the UK.

Combining general knowledge with the skill of playing darts, contestants competed to win cash and prizes, such as a speedboat or a new car.

Welcoming this week's hopefuls, the presenter introduced John Cooper, a married father-of-two from Pembrokeshire, in Wales.

'You've got an unusual hobby, John, haven't you?' Bowen asked.

'Oh yes, the scuba diving…' John replied.

He described the beautiful Welsh coastline in detail.

'We've got deep water where you can swim over mountains and all sorts,' he continued.

John's time on the show quickly came to an end when all three of his darts missed their target.

A flicker of fury filled his eyes, but he forced a smile, before being sent home to Milford Haven.

It was as beautiful as John had described.

But a dark shadow loomed over the town.

Four years earlier, in 1985, a mansion owned by a millionaire farmer, Richard Thomas, then 58, and his sister Helen, 54, had been broken into.

Both siblings had been shot at point-blank range.

Their house had then been set on fire, their charred bodies found inside, days later.

Despite a large-scale police inquiry, the killer was never found.

Still, the stunning coastline meant it remained a holiday hotspot.

By the time of John Cooper's appearance on *Bullseye*, Peter Dixon, then 51, and his wife Gwenda, 52, had been visiting Pembrokeshire for 16 years.

In June 1989, they pitched a tent at a Little Haven caravan park.

When the Dixons didn't return home by July, their son grew worried and called the caravan park.

The manager confirmed that their car, tent and belongings were still there.

But Peter and Gwenda had vanished.

A search discovered their bodies 600 yards away.

They'd been shot five times, at close range.

Their bank cards had been taken.

Later, a witness described a 'wild man' withdrawing money from a bank.

Police drew a sketch of the suspect, capturing his height, build, and his curly haircut and moustache.

Yet the killer remained uncaptured, and, again, this Welsh slice of paradise become home to another unsolved murder.

The violence continued.

In 1996, as a group of teens played outside, they were targeted by a masked man with a sawn-off shotgun.

He demanded money, before raping one of the girls and sexually assaulting another.

Gwenda and Peter Dixon were on holiday

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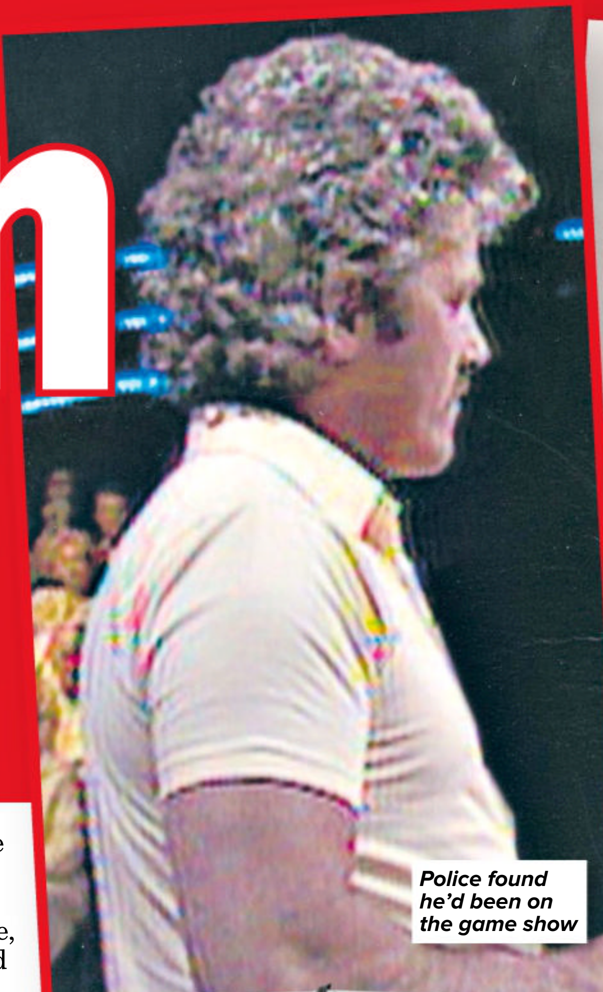
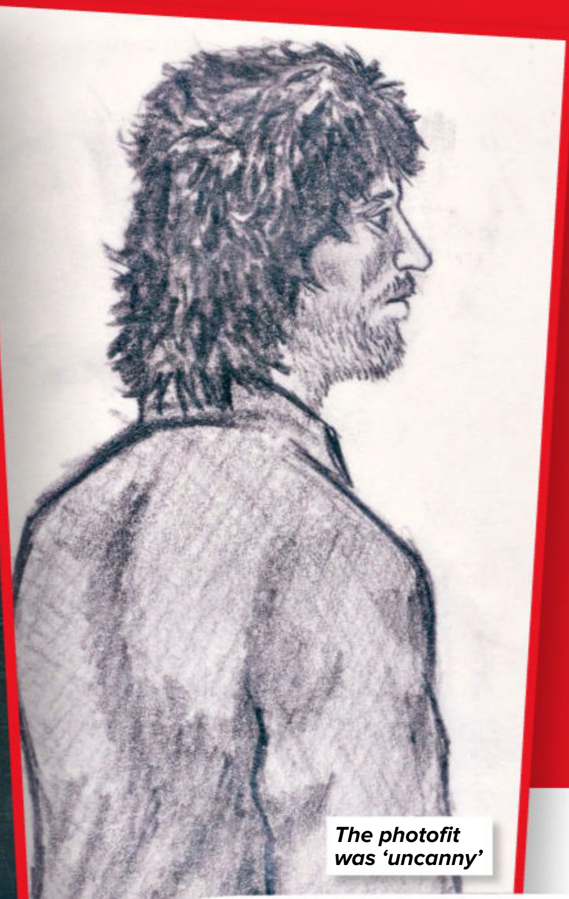
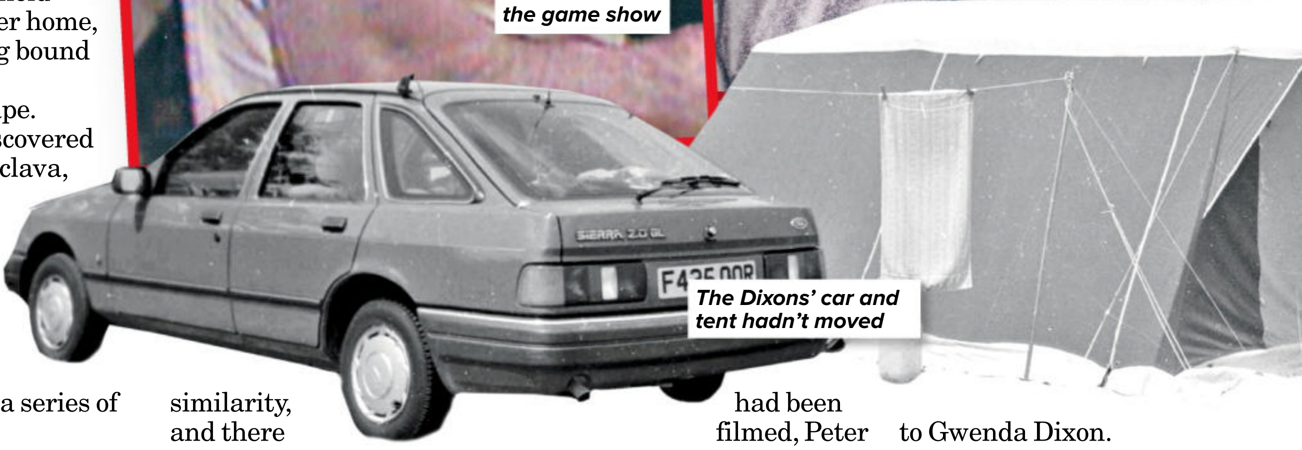


Police found he'd been on the game show



The photofit was 'uncanny'



The Dixons' car and tent hadn't moved

The following year, he struck again.

A woman was held at gunpoint in her home, but despite being bound and gagged, she managed to escape.

Police later discovered a discarded balaclava, gloves and a shotgun…

Evidence that led them toJohn Cooper.

In 1998, he was arrested in connection with a series of home invasions.

But, while the crimes all involved a shotgun, there was nothing directly linking the killings in the 1980s to the recent crimes.

Cooper was sentenced to 16 years for armed robbery and 30 burglaries.

But advances in technology saw many cold cases being opened again.

In 2005, Detective Superintendent Steve Wilkins was determined to find out who had been responsible for the Pembrokeshire murders.

And John Cooper was his main suspect.

The shotgun was a major similarity, and there had been no other serious crimes in the area since he'd been imprisoned.

With his jail time coming to an end, DS Wilkins was worried.

'People who kill like he did, execution-style, they enjoy it,' he said.

Cooper described the exact spot of the murder

Looking into Cooper's history, he discovered he'd once appeared on the TV game show *Bullseye*.

With the help of an ITV journalist, the video was recovered from the archives.

DS Wilkins was stunned to hear Cooper describing the exact spot where, three weeks after the TV footage had been filmed, Peter and Gwenda Dixon were executed.

And when he retrieved the police sketch, a side-by-side comparison showed an 'uncanny' resemblance to Cooper's appearance on *Bullseye* back in 1989.

'For the first time, we could see Cooper as he would have looked at the time of the Dixons' murder. In my 30 years' service, I had seen many artist's impressions and photofits, but I had never seen as close a match as this,' DS Wilkins said.

A pair of shorts recovered from Cooper's home on his arrest were found to have a blood spot on them.

DNA technology soon determined that it belonged to Gwenda Dixon.

Another trace of blood was found on Cooper's shotgun, this time belonging to Peter.

And fibres in the pocket of the shorts matched Richard Thomas' sock from the first murder back in 1985.

Following a six-year investigation, in May 2011, John Cooper, then 66, was sentenced to life in prison for the murders of Richard and Helen Thomas in 1985 and Peter and Gwenda Dixon in 1989.

Looking back, the fury behind John Cooper's eyes when he missed his target on *Bullseye* was not just the rage of an angry darts player.

It was the evil of a serial killer.

WORDS: FRANCESCA WOODSTOCK. PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK

NO REMORSE

Murder m

When police picked up a killer, he pinpointed his missing victi

When two police officers noticed a pick-up truck being driven without a licence plate, it was enough for them to pull the vehicle over.

It was the early hours of 28 June 1993 in Long Island, USA.

But when they signalled for the vehicle to stop, the driver kept going.

The police gave chase.

In a hurry to evade them, the truck crashed into a telegraph pole.

Pulling out their guns, the officers approached the vehicle and ordered the driver to get out of the car.

This time he had no choice but to comply.

The stop should have been a simple, minor traffic offence.

But as they spoke, the two officers noticed a horrific smell coming from the car.

And when they popped open the boot, they discovered a decomposing body.

'At first he was telling us, like, he didn't know anything about the body in the back of the car, and then he was basically saying that he knew she was there but he doesn't know what happened,' former New York State Police Trooper Sean Ruane said.

Joel Rifkin, then 34, was arrested.

Wrapped in tarpaulin, the corpse was discovered to be a missing sex worker, 22-year-old Tiffany Bresciani.

In custody, Rifkin confessed to murder.

But this wasn't his first victim.

In fact, he admitted to killing an astonishing 17 women.

All sex workers and drug addicts.

> **He targeted women he believed wouldn't be missed**

He even provided names and maps outlining where he had dumped body parts.

The police were totally dumbfounded.

If Rifkin was telling the truth, officers had picked up a prolific serial killer entirely by accident.

And it quickly appeared as if he was, indeed, telling the truth.

With the help of Rifkin's sadistic murder map, authorities were able to identify more bodies.

His first victim was Heidi 'Susie' Balch, a prostitute he killed and dismembered in 1989.

Her decapitated head had been discovered on a golf course that same year, but her torso and legs had been disposed of separately.

Her teeth had been pulled out with pliers and her fingertips severed, meaning police had been unable to identify her remains – let alone her killer.

Julie Blackbird was the next victim.

Rifkin had driven her back to his home and beat her with a table leg, before strangling her.

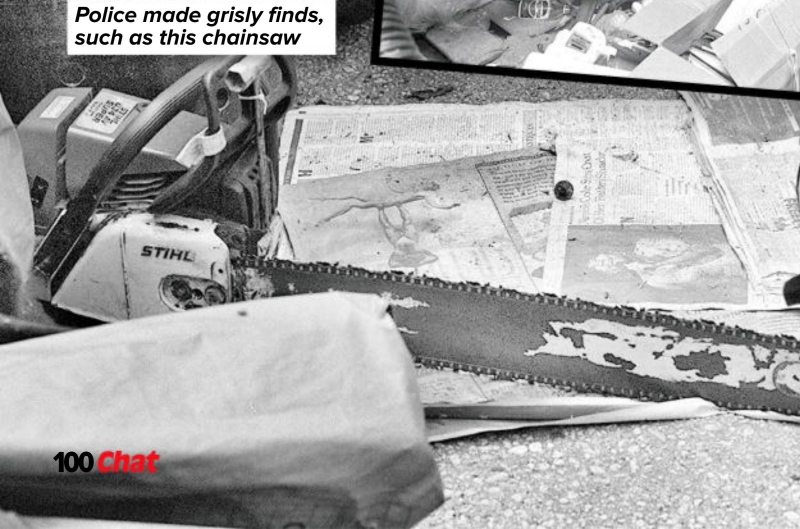
He'd disposed of her body parts in buckets weighed down with concrete, thrown into a river and canal.

More victims followed.

Barbara Jacobs, Mary Ellen DeLuca, Yun Lee, Lorraine Orvieto, Anna Lopez, Jenny Soto… the list went on.

Investigating his house, where he lived with his mum Jeanne Rifkin

Rifkin's garage was a scene of horror



Police made grisly finds, such as this chainsaw

The vehicle that led to Rifkin's capture

WORDS: SARAH WHITELEY. PHOTOS: GETTY, RICK MAIMAN, THOMAS KRAKOWIAK, DISNEY

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and sister Jan, officers discovered dozens of women's ID cards, drivers' licences, clothing and jewellery, all taken from his victims as sick souvenirs.

And in the garage, a wheelbarrow was filled with human blood.

A chainsaw was also discovered and taken as evidence.

He had chosen his victims carefully, targeting prostitutes and drug addicts, who he believed wouldn't be missed.

The discoveries at his home were shocking.

So who was this brutal butcher who had embarked on a four-year killing spree without leaving a clue?

Born to two unwed students in January 1959, at just three weeks old he was adopted by Bernard – Ben – and Jeanne Rifkin.

But Rifkin struggled.

Awkward, with poor posture and prescription glasses, he was bullied mercilessly at school.

His head was dunked down the toilet, and he was nicknamed 'Turtle' because of his slow gait.

DO NOT ENTER

Aged 13, in 1972, Rifkin watched Alfred Hitchcock's film *Frenzy* and began fantasising about raping and strangling sex workers.

In 1977, when Ben and Jeanne gave him his first car, he started picking up prostitutes.

And in 1987, after Ben's death, he spiralled into depression.

Two years later, he slaughtered his first victim, Susie.

Despite the evidence – and his confession – Rifkin pleaded not guilty to the murders.

But that didn't stop him from being found guilty of nine of them in 1994, and eventually being sentenced to 203 years in prison.

Rifkin spoke to his victims' families in court, saying, 'I want you to know that I'm sorry for what I've done to you and your daughters.

What I have done can never be forgiven. But I ask you to believe me when I tell you that I will never understand the part of me that caused me to do these terrible things to your children.'

Rifkin displayed no remorse over his crimes

In 1998, an old school friend and ex-police officer, Robert Mladinich, wrote to Rifkin and went to see his old classmate a year later, to find out 'how somebody, who seemed like a very nice fellow, could commit such heinous crimes'.

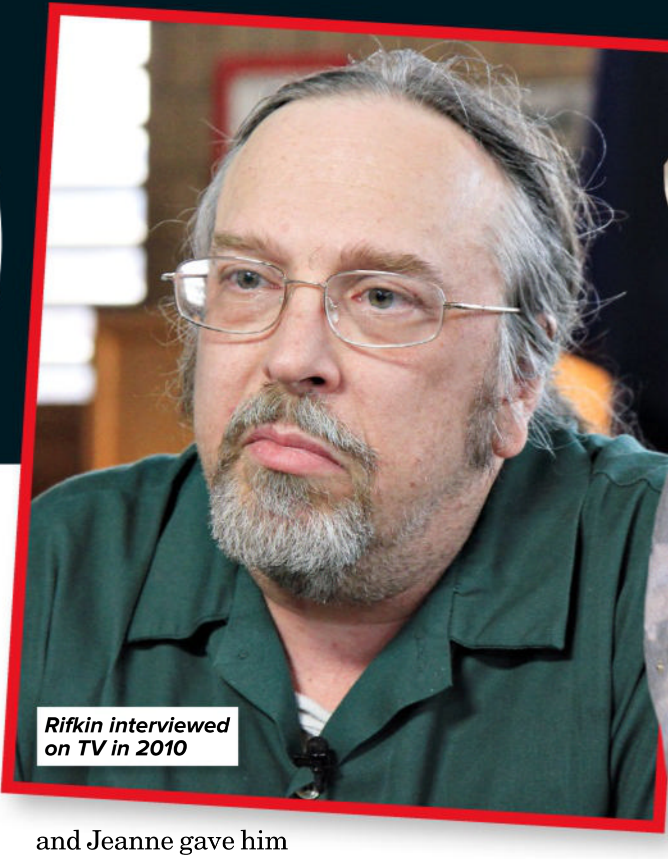
During their talks, Robert claimed Rifkin displayed no remorse over his crimes.

'Joel was very calm about it… there was no emotion whatsoever. There was no regret or wanting to bring the victims back,' he said.

Instead, Rifkin described to Robert in graphic detail about how he beat Susie to death.

'I must have hit her 20, 30 times until my arms got tired,' Rifkin said. 'I just lost control.'

Susie, somehow, managed to survive the attack and, in his 'panic', Rifkin strangled her, then took her down to the basement and chopped her up with a craft knife.



Rifkin interviewed on TV in 2010

The killer entering court for his trial

Carnage at the spa

A sex addict on a shooting spree was shopped by mum and dad

Shortly before 5pm on Tuesday 16 March 2021, police got a call.

It was from Young's Asian Massage, in Atlanta, USA.

Five people there had been shot.

Arriving at the scene, police found the bodies of three women and one man, all dead. Another man lay injured.

Long told police that he couldn't control his urges

Less than an hour later, at 5.47pm, police were alerted to a robbery at another massage parlour.

Shots had been fired at Gold Spa, 30 miles away.

A woman hiding in the back called authorities.

A 'white guy' had a gun, she said. But she didn't know if he was still there.

'Please just come,' she begged cops.

Three more women had been killed.

As police investigated, a third call came in about another shooting.

This time, it was just across the road.

At Aromatherapy Spa, also a massage parlour, another woman had been fatally wounded.

Now, eight people were dead. Gunned down in less than two hours.

Seven of the victims were female. And six were of Asian descent.

With fears the attacks had been racially motivated, shockwaves rippled through the Asian community.

Police launched a manhunt and uncovered CCTV footage of the suspected shooter pulling into a car park just minutes before the first shooting.

They posted the grainy images to Facebook, pleading for witnesses.

And as his face was shared across social media, police received a tip-off from an unexpected source.

The parents of 21-year-old Robert Aaron Long.

They said the man in the image was their son.

Fearing he was connected to the shootings, they used an app on their phone to locate him.

Authorities tracked his location then gave chase, shunting his car off the road.

He was arrested, 150 miles from the scene of the first crime.

Police suspected he may have been intending to carry out further atrocities.

But it wasn't clear whether the heinous acts were race-related hate crimes.

In a statement, police said that Long might have been a customer at similar parlours, and this could have been an act of revenge.

But the businesses were 'legally operating' and not known places of sex work.

The following day, police named the victims.

Delaina Ashley Yaun, 33, Paul Andre Michels, 54, Xiaojie Tan, 49, and Daoyou Feng, 44, all lost their lives at Young's Asian Massage.

The injured man was named as Elcias R Hernandez-Ortiz, 30.

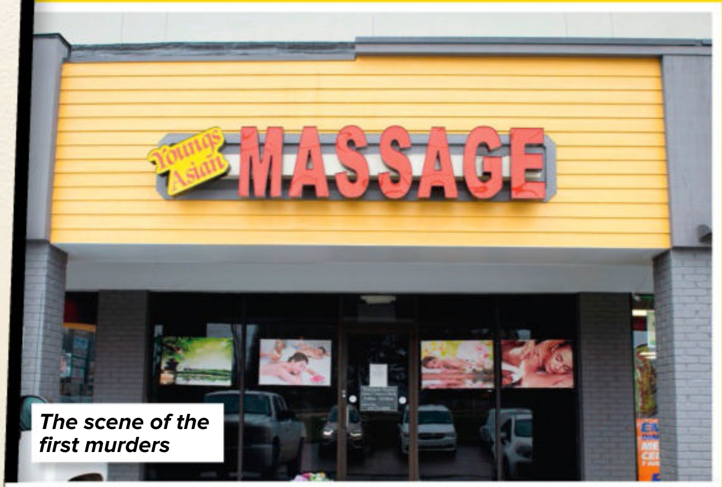
And at Gold Spa and Aromatherapy Spa,

STOP
RACIST
VIOLENCE
Supreme
SUPREME

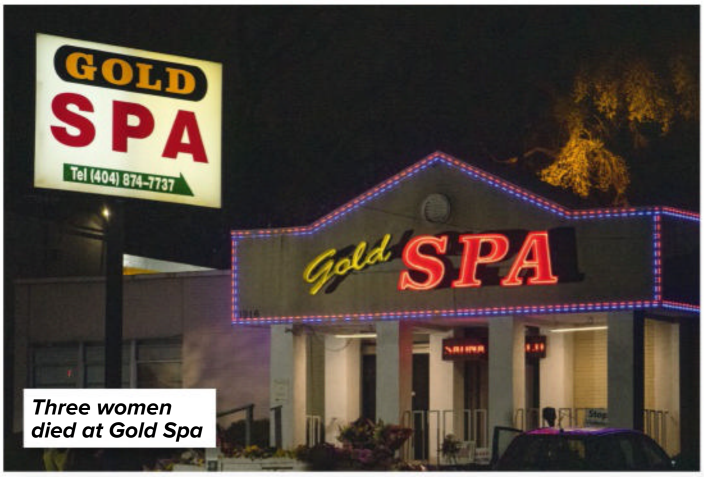
A New York rally against hate, after the shootings

WORDS: MISHAAL KHAN. PHOTOS: GETTY, ALAMY, CRISP COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Robert Aaron Long left a trail of horror



The scene of the first murders



Three women died at Gold Spa

AROMATHERAPY
SPA
404-549-8595
GOLD
SPA

Long shot his last victim here

Suncha Kim, 69, Soon Chung Park, 74, Hyun Jung Grant, 51, and Yong Ae Yue, 63, were all killed.

With most of the victims of Asian descent, people in the community were scared.

In custody, Long took responsibility for the deadly rampage but denied it had been racially motivated.

Admitting that he had a ‘sexual addiction’, he said he’d wanted to get rid of any potential temptation.

That he couldn’t control his urges to see prostitutes or watch pornography.

This was his way to ‘punish’ those who worked in the sex industry, he said.

Days earlier, his parents had thrown him out of the family home due to his extreme addiction to porn.

He spent hours every day watching it online.

He’d even been treated for sex addiction at a rehab clinic in the years prior.

ASIAN
IS NOT
A VIRUS

The day after eight innocent people lost their lives, Long was charged with eight counts of murder, as well as one count of aggravated assault.

In July 2021, Robert Aaron Long, then 22, admitted four of the murders, which took place at Young’s Asian Massage, in Cherokee County.

He admitted to being ‘embarrassed and ashamed’ of his sex addiction.

The court was told he’d bought a gun intending to kill himself, but instead decided to commit so-called ‘vigilante justice’ against workers he believed to be in the sex industry.

Agreeing to a plea deal, he avoided trial and was sentenced to four consecutive life sentences, plus 35 years.

Four additional murder charges still hung over his head, which all fell under the separate jurisdiction of Fulton County.

This time, the prosecution refused to let Long take a plea deal.

Instead, he’d have to stand trial for the murder of four women, plus domestic terrorism charges and a hate-crime enhancement.

Lawyers revealed they planned to argue that his motive was based on the victims’ race and gender.

They’d be seeking the death penalty.

In September 2021, Long pleaded not guilty.

With the trial still pending, in March 2022, to mark one year since the abhorrent shootings, 150 people gathered at a local park, paying tribute to the people who lost their lives.

Robert Peterson, the son of victim Yong Ae Yue, told how much he missed his loving mother.

‘I miss her food. I miss her waiting by the door when we came over. I just miss all those small things we took for granted when she was here,’ he said.

It’s yet to be seen if Robert Aaron Long will spend the rest of his life behind bars, or find himself on death row.

Either way, the deranged mass murderer will never be a free man again.

Without a trace...

A loving mum had gone missing – but someone knew where she was

What was hidden in the family's garage?

After visiting her divorce lawyer, Elizabeth Sullivan was looking forward to beginning a new life.

A new start for her and her two girls.

It was October 2014, and Elizabeth was ending her marriage to US naval officer Matthew Sullivan – things hadn't been right for some time.

Just six months before, in March 2014, Elizabeth had called police to tell them that there'd been domestic violence in their relationship and that they were arguing about custody of their children and child support.

She was worried the situation might escalate – they were living on separate floors of their shared house in Liberty Station, San Diego.

Elizabeth had met someone else on a dating site, something that Matthew had found out about in September.

But after the meeting to discuss a divorce, Elizabeth didn't make it to an appointment with her lawyer the following day.

Instead, her friend Nathan Caracter had reported her missing.

Her phone was switched off.

Although police officers found her car near her home, there was no sign of her.

Despite their differences, Matthew Sullivan was every inch the devastated husband when he did an interview with *People* magazine a month later.

Matthew was every inch the devastated husband

'The girls need their mum,' he said, earnestly. 'She's never been gone this long. She's been with them their whole lives, while I was at work or on deployment… she was always there.

I'm always looking around the neighbourhood, trying to catch a glimpse of her.

Even if I got a phone call saying she's OK, it would put my mind at rest. But nothing at this point.'

In the early days, there were two sightings of Elizabeth – one near some

Sullivan knew more than he was letting on

WORDS: SARAH WHITELEY. PHOTOS: GETTY (NOT ACTUAL FREEZER), ALAMY, DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Elizabeth had been seeking a fresh start

fields close to her home, then again near San Diego International Airport.

Detectives followed these leads, and others.

Her father Edward Ricks made a heartfelt plea for information about his missing daughter and begged for her safe return.

Her relatives hired a private detective, set up social media pages and a fundraising web page to keep the search going, and distributed missing person fliers.

Despite their efforts, the case turned cold.

That was, until two years later, on 4 October 2016.

Elizabeth's decomposed body was found floating in a San Diego bay, around half a mile from where she was last seen.

An autopsy revealed she had a broken nose and jaw, and had been stabbed at least five times.

The district attorney believed that she hadn't been in the water that long, and that, instead, she had been stored somewhere – perhaps preserved in a freezer – before she was dumped in the bay.

Interestingly, the day her body was found, movers had arrived at Matthew's house.

Him, his children with Elizabeth, his fiancée and their new baby were relocating to the East Coast.

It was enough to arouse suspicions, and police decided to search the house again.

This time, they found evidence of blood under the carpet in her bedroom and a bloodied knife hidden in the attic.

Yet, Matthew denied being involved in his wife's death.

He explained that the blood had come from Elizabeth self-harming.

He said he had found her bleeding and had bandaged her wound, agreeing to her request to not call the emergency services.

Yet, the police weren't going to give up that easily and continued to build their case against him.

And by January 2018, they were ready.

They arrested Matthew at his new home in Wyoming, Delaware, and charged him with murder.

When his case went to court in February 2019, he pleaded not guilty.

But the prosecution had a strong case.

Deputy district attorney Jill Lindberg argued that Matthew had beaten and stabbed Elizabeth in a bedroom of their home because she was having an affair and planning to leave him.

Their children, aged just two and four at the time, were in the next room when she suffered the deadly attack.

'He had lots of motives, he had the means, he had the opportunity,' she said.

'The crime scene was in her bedroom. The murder weapon was in the attic over his bedroom.'

She also alleged that Matthew had kept Elizabeth's body in the family home, hidden in a freezer in the garage for two years, only dumping it when he was planning to move.

'He made her look like the person who had abandoned her family, when that was not the case and he knew it,' she said.

'The defendant has never shown any sign of remorse for what happened to his wife, for what he did to her or to her family and friends by letting them believe for two years that she'd just left.'

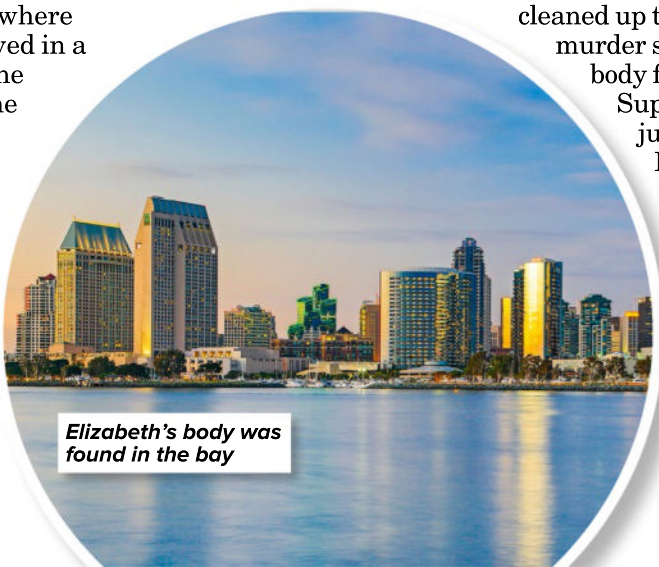
He made her look like she'd abandoned her family

It was enough for the jury, and in March 2020, Sullivan, then 35, was found guilty of second-degree murder.

He was sentenced to 16 years.

'The jury verdict and the evidence at trial made it clear that Matthew Sullivan brutally murdered his wife, methodically cleaned up the messy murder site, and hid the body for years,' Superior Court judge Albert Harutunian III said.

'He almost got away with it, but his final attempt to hide the body at the bottom of the bay failed.'


Elizabeth's body was found in the bay

LOVE GONE SOUR

Trouble in para

Their dream life turned in

Samantha and John wanted a fresh start

When Samantha, then 42, and John Jones, 52, decided to leave their sleepy Somerset village for a new life in Malaysia in 2008, they were expecting to step into paradise.

Samantha, a former insurance clerk, originally met John at a fire service charity bash.

John, a retired fire service chief, was so taken by her that he left his then-wife and children to be with her.

But despite his marriage breakdown, John remained a loving dad and granddad to his two children and four grandchildren.

At first settling together in Somerset, the loved-up couple then decided to move to the Malaysian island of Langkawi.

They had fallen in love with the island, adored by holidaymakers for its pristine blue waters and white sandy beaches, on a 2002 summer holiday.

So, when they found out about a Malay government scheme that granted foreign nationals long-stay visas, they jumped at the chance.

At first, life in their new tropical home was perfect and John, a doting family man, still found time to visit his children and grandchildren back home.

But sadly, things soon turned sour. He'd always been a drinker, but in retirement John's drinking habit had intensified, and with it came an onslaught of abuse.

Unfortunately for Samantha, she was usually on the receiving end of John's anger.

He became controlling and, according to accounts from Samantha's friends, even banned her from talking to other men.

Sometimes, John would get physically violent, beating Samantha in his drunken rage.

One argument ended with Samantha suffering from a broken jaw, and on another occasion John attacked her with a sword.

Day in, day out, it was the same story.

Samantha would wait nervously for John to get home, wondering what she'd be subjected to upon his return.

But Samantha loved John. Didn't want to believe he could be so cruel.

Was too frightened to speak to the Malaysian authorities, nervous that domestic abuse was too much of a 'taboo' in the country.

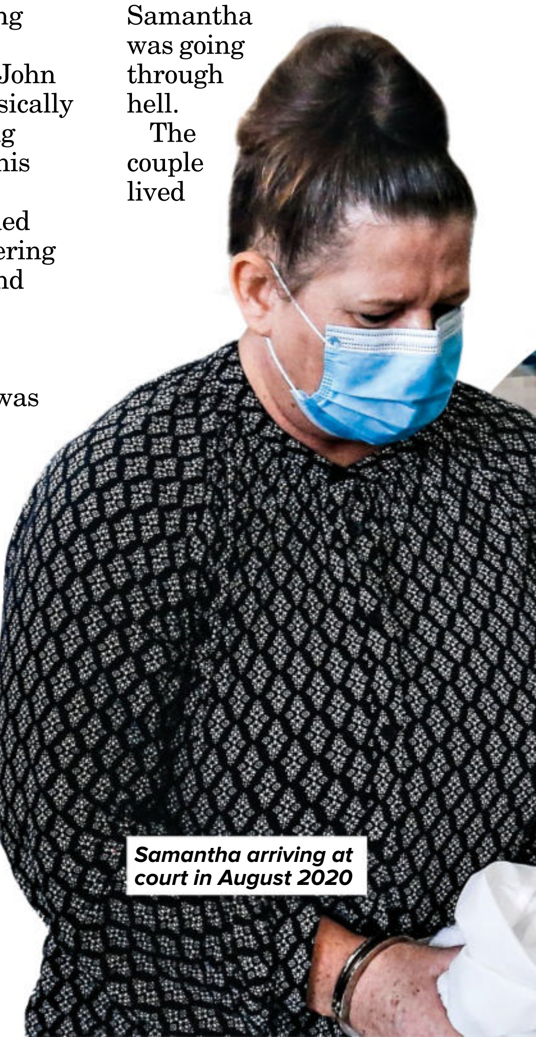
She hoped that therapy might help John's issues.

Tried her best to help him work through his anger problems.

Sadly, her best efforts were without success.

Their life may have looked enviable from the outside, but behind closed doors, Samantha was going through hell.

The couple lived


Samantha arriving at court in August 2020

WORDS: VERONIQUE HAWKSWORTH. PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK, GETTY, ALAMY

dise

to a nightmare...

Langkawi island seemed idyllic

together in their gorgeous villa in the town of Kampung Gelam for 10 years.

All the while, John's drinking got worse and so did his violent outbursts.

On 18 October 2018, John spent the whole day drinking with his ex-pat mates.

It was to be his last jaunt to the pub.

That night, as usual when John came home drunk, Samantha feared what he held in store for her.

Lashing out in anger, John greeted her in the kitchen with a punch in the face.

A grisly scene at the couple's villa

As she recoiled in pain, he viciously kicked her in the stomach.

Fearing for her life, Samantha reached for a long purple kitchen knife.

'Go on, stab me,' John shouted, taunting her.

In a frenzy, Samantha ran into the bathroom, but John followed closely behind.

As he continued his attack, Samantha lunged with the knife, stabbing John in the chest.

The fatal blow pierced John's liver, and he collapsed on their polished tile floor.

Looking down at John's lifeless body in a panic, Samantha dropped the bloodied knife and ran to a neighbour's house to call for help.

The neighbour rushed over, but by the time an ambulance arrived, John had bled to death.

Samantha was swiftly arrested and charged with murder, a crime that carries the death penalty in Malaysia.

If convicted of killing her husband of 17 years, she would face death by hanging.

John's behaviour was a problem

Samantha had suffered in silence

But she never meant to kill him, and insisted she had acted defensively.

Behind bars in a rat-infested cell at Pokok Sena jail, she was distraught.

She had always thought John would end up killing her.

Instead, it was her who'd ended up with his blood on her hands.

Following appeals from her defence, it was decided that she wouldn't face the death penalty after all.

'I want everyone to know I loved that man,' said Samantha tearfully, the night before her trial.

When the court heard of John's violent past, backed up by Samantha's friends, she pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of culpable homicide.

This meant she had committed murder without intent.

Nothing could ever undo the trauma of that night

On 3 August 2020, Samantha, then 54, was sentenced to 42 months in jail, starting from the date of her arrest in 2018, and received a fine of 10,000 ringgit (approx £1,815).

Samantha was let out of jail early for good behaviour in September 2021, and was allowed to return home to her family in the UK.

But nothing could ever undo the trauma of that fateful night – or bring back her troubled husband.

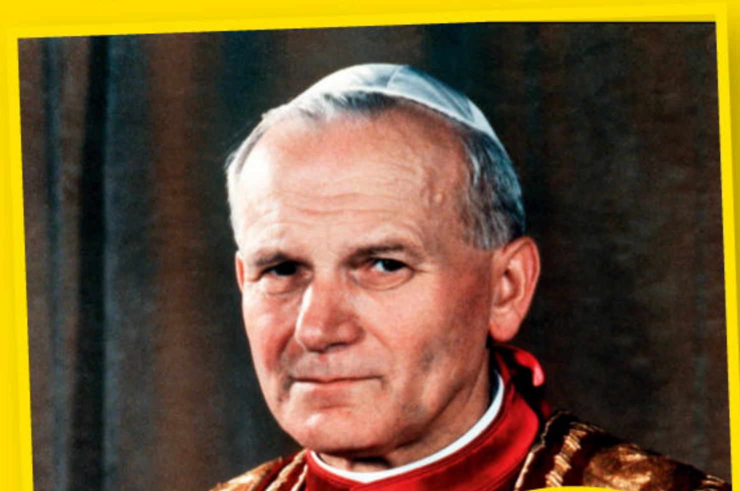
HELP AND SUPPORT

If you have been a victim of domestic abuse, call the freephone, 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247 or visit the website at nationaldahelpline.org.uk.

NO TRACE, NO TRAIL

Secrets & lies

A missing girl sparked an unholy mystery that spanned four decades



Pope John Paul II appealed for Emanuela's return

St Peter's Square, where the Pope had been shot

Growing up inside the walls of the Vatican City, the Orlandi family was part of a tiny community.

A place less than a thousand people call home.

Ruled by the Pope, the Vatican is the centre of the Roman Catholic Church.

One of the most sacred places on earth.

So 15-year-old Emanuela Orlandi and her four siblings always felt safe.

Their father, Ercole Orlandi, worked in a role overseeing private audiences with the Pope.

Emanuela was talented, with a passion for music.

She sang in a choir and attended the Tommaso Ludovico da Victoria School in Rome for flute lessons several times a week.

Then, on 22 June 1983, everything changed.

Emanuela was running late for class, so asked her brother Pietro to take her.

When he refused, she stormed out of the house.

Emanuela made it to class, but afterwards she rang home.

Her sister Federica answered the call.

Emanuela told her that she'd met an Avon representative on her way to school, who said that she could make money selling cosmetics.

She was tempted, but Federica told her to come home and talk it over with their parents.

Afterwards, her classmate spotted Emanuela standing at the bus stop.

But by 8pm, she still hadn't arrived home.

Her mother worried as Pietro drove around, searching for his sister.

But there was no sign.

As dawn broke, the Orlandi family filed a missing persons report.

They printed hundreds of missing posters, urging any witnesses to get in touch.

But by 3 July 1983, Emanuela had been missing for 11 days.

Speaking from the balcony of the famous Apostolic Palace, Pope John Paul II addressed the people of the Vatican.

'I share the anxiety and angst of her parents, but hold on to the hope that the human spirit remains somewhere in the hearts of those responsible,' he said.

Two days later, on 5 July 1983, Ercole received an anonymous phone call.

Emanuela's voice was played down the line.

'Did you like what you heard?' the caller asked.

Ercole pleaded, said he and his wife would die for their daughter.

The call was disconnected, but another anonymous call was made to the Vatican press room.

'We have Emanuela Orlandi, we will free her only when Mehmet Ali Agca – the papal attacker – is freed,' a news reporter read.

Mehmet Ali Agca was a Turkish national serving a life sentence in an Italian prison for making an attempt on the Pope's life.

Two years earlier, on 13 May 1981, as Pope John Paul II greeted an adoring crowd in the Vatican's St Peter's Square, Agca had shot him four times.

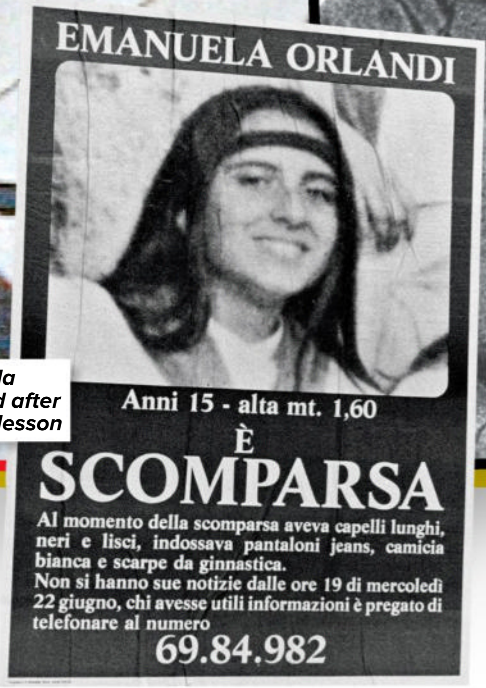
Eventually, the Pope made a full recovery.

But the shocking ultimatum made no sense to the Orlandi family.

What did an innocent girl have to do with an

WORDS: FRANCESCA WOODSTOCK. PHOTOS: ALAMY, GETTY

Emanuela vanished after a music lesson



EMANUELA ORLANDI

Anni 15 - alta mt. 1,60

È

SCOMPARSA

Al momento della scomparsa aveva capelli lunghi, neri e lisci, indossava pantaloni jeans, camicia bianca e scarpe da ginnastica.
Non si hanno sue notizie dalle ore 19 di mercoledi 22 giugno, chi avesse utili informazioni è pregato di telefonare al numero

69.84.982

Would-be assassin Mehmet Ali Agca

assassination attempt?

In total, the Pope made eight public appeals for Emanuela's release but Agca remained in prison.

'If our dear, adored Emanuela is dead,' Ercole said in a public plea, 'tell us the place to find our Emanuela, so that on our knees we can pray for her, near her.'

But the phone calls stopped, the trail went cold.

The Pope told the Orlandi family that he'd do everything in his power to bring their girl home.

He even offered Pietro a job working for the Vatican bank.

But in 2004, Ercole passed away, without ever having learnt what happened to his daughter.

The following year, Pope John Paul II also died.

Pietro swore to keep searching for the truth.

In 2008, Sabrina Miardi came forward as a witness.

She said she was dating an Italian gangster, Enrico De Pedis, at the time of the disappearance.

The mobster had since died, but according to Sabrina, the kidnapped Emanuela was handed over to someone driving a black car with a Vatican number plate, who was dressed in clerical clothing.

Sabrina said De Pedis had told her that the kidnapping had been all about money and was linked to the Vatican bank.

In 2012, his diamond-studded tomb was exhumed, but no evidence was found.

Again, the trail went cold.

When Pope Francis was appointed in 2013, Pietro hoped he might be able to shed light on the mystery of his sister's disappearance.

'Emanuela is in heaven,' Pope Francis told the Orlandi family.

Perhaps assuming that after 30 years she was no longer alive.

'It chilled my blood to hear the Pope say Emanuela was dead,' Pietro said.

He still holds out hope.

'We don't know if she is alive or dead because there is no evidence…'

In 2022, a childhood friend of Emanuela's came forward with a shock admission.

She claimed that, in the days leading up to her disappearance, Emanuela confided that she was sexually molested by 'someone close to the Pope'.

She said she was too afraid to tell anyone.

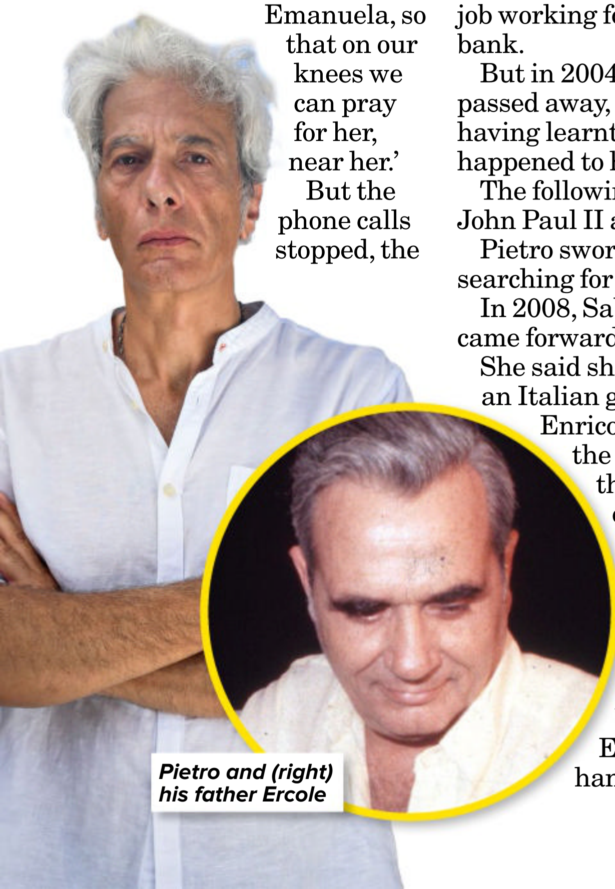
Despite the many theories, the Vatican has denied any involvement.

Four decades on, Pietro Orlandi is still fighting to find out what happened to his sister.

In 2023, a Vatican prosecutor agreed to reopen the case.

'It's the moment to tell the truth – it's been far too long,' Pietro said.

It's the moment to tell the truth – it's been far too long



Pietro (right) his father Ercole

MERCILESS ATTACK

Bedroom bloodbath

She'd barely started a new life when it was brutally ended

Rhys Hancock set out to kill

Her hands shaking, Denise Hancock picked up her mobile phone and dialled 999.

It was 4.11am on New Year's Day 2020 and her son Rhys, then 40, had just found out his ex-partner, Helen Almey, 39, had a new man.

'I feel like I want to kill them,' he told his mum.

Things had been looking up for the father-of-three just a year earlier.

He'd been appointed as the headteacher at Stanton Vale Special School in Long Eaton, near the couple's home in the leafy Derbyshire village of Duffield.

But things had been rocky with Helen, a PE teacher, for a while.

Some friends of Helen described Rhys as a Jekyll and Hyde character, very muscular and sometimes scary.

According to them, Helen had been keen to get rid of Rhys for the last five years.

There were always problems at home, police and ambulances had been called. Helen had tried many times to make a life without Rhys, but they always ended up getting back together.

Only, this time things were different.

Helen had ended things for good in October 2019.

Rhys moved back in with his mum, while Helen stayed in the marital home.

Rhys didn't take the separation well at all.

Later that month, he was arrested and put on bail after he allegedly threw something at his estranged wife, leaving her injured.

And now, just a few hours into the new year, Rhys had had enough.

A week earlier, on Boxing Day, he'd discovered that Helen had well and truly moved on.

She'd met someone new, Martin Griffiths, 48, the head of a marketing firm.

Martin represented an exciting, fun new start for Helen.

But it was the final straw for fiery headteacher Rhys.

Rhys had spent that Christmas with his kids and his mum Denise, but as they saw in the new year, Denise grew more and more worried.

He told her that he wanted to kill Helen and her new lover Martin.

Was it just an empty threat said in the heat of the moment?

A throwaway comment?

Denise couldn't be sure.

Although her son seemed strangely calm, his words had sent a chill down her spine.

Her son's words had sent a chill down her spine

Especially when he then told her he'd be sent to prison for 25 years for what he was about to do.

Said he wanted Helen to feel the same level of pain that he had felt.

He told his mum that he had a key to their old family home.

And he intended to let himself in.

Denise watched in horror as Rhys grabbed two knives from her kitchen.

Then pulled out the cord of her landline to stop her calling for help.

Watching her son leave, armed with two knives, she searched for her mobile phone.

'Please, you need to go. She has been with another man. My son found out on Friday night. He now has two knives and is on his way there,' she told the operator.

The operator told her

WORDS: SARAH WHITELEY. PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK

Helen with Rhys and their family

Martin Griffiths, Helen's new man

to call Helen directly but she said 'she had no idea what she would say.'

So the police attempted to ring Helen, warn her of the danger.

Only, her phone went straight to answer machine.

It was already too late.

Just 15 minutes after Denise had made her emergency phone call, Rhys was making his own.

'I have just murdered my wife in her bed. I have stabbed them and slit their throats. There is blood everywhere,' he said.

The police arrived at Helen's home two minutes later.

They found Rhys outside, his shirt soaked in blood.

'I'm hardly going to deny it,' he shrugged. 'Look at me.'

He'd gone into the house via an unlocked back door and crept upstairs to the bedroom, where he found Helen and Martin in bed.

When there, he'd butchered them both.

He stabbed his ex no less than 66 times.

They found one of the knives, blade and handle, buried deep in her abdomen.

Martin had 37 injuries.

He was already dead by the time help arrived at the bloodbath, but paramedics spent 15 minutes resuscitating Helen.

He didn't bother to deny the bloody, brutal crime

Only, the mum of three couldn't be saved either.

Rhys was immediately arrested and questioned, then charged.

He didn't bother to deny the bloody, brutal crime.

In July 2020, he pleaded guilty to two counts of murder via video link at Derby Crown Court.

While he awaited his sentence, Helen and Martin's families attempted to come to terms with their loss.

In a statement, Helen's family described her as a lovely, beautiful, friendly, bubbly and social person.

Martin's ex-wife said she was 'absolutely devastated for me, my children and all involved.'

In October 2020, Hancock was sentenced to life in prison with a minimum term of 31 years.

'There is no escaping these murders were premeditated, they were savage, the attack was merciless, there were elements of sadism and the intention was always, and only to kill,' prosecutor Michael Auty QC told the court.

'Perhaps above all else, they were committed in the coldest of blood,' he added.

'Your actions that night left your three children without a mother and you left Martin's family without a son and his children without a father,' Judge Nirmal Shant QC told Rhys when sentencing him.

It was meant to be the start of a new year for Helen, the fresh start she'd been longing for for so long.

But because of the jealous rage of her unhinged ex, it was not to be.

FAMILY STRIFE

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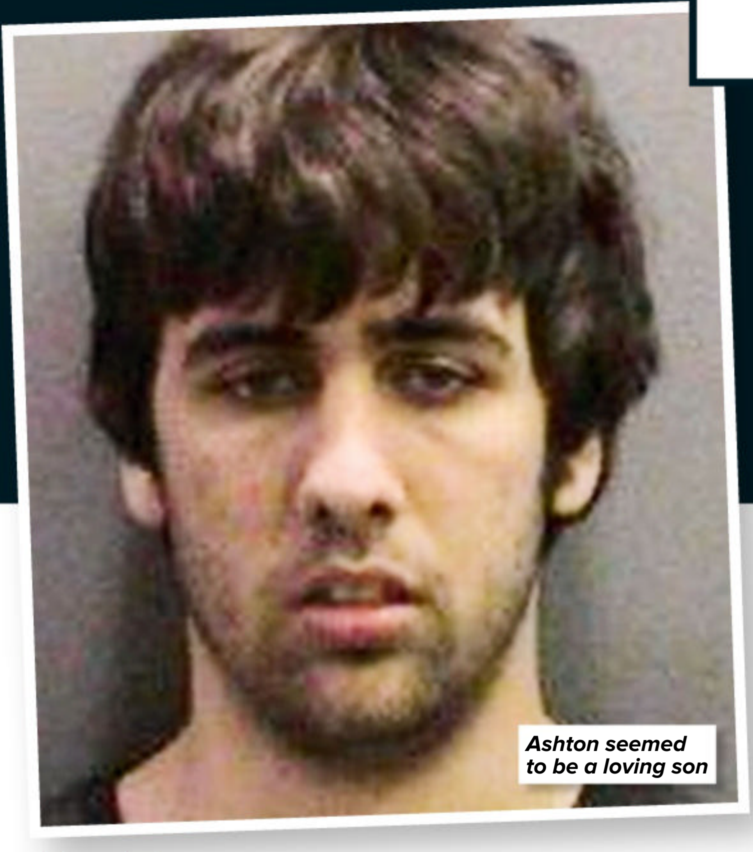
After gunshots in the home came a shocking confession



Ashton seemed to be a loving son

He was a former surfing champion, handsome and charming.

She was a powerful real-estate mogul, running a business worth close to $80 million.

It'd be hard to argue that Brad and Andra Sachs didn't have an enviable life.

Their two oldest sons, Myles and Ashton, were away at college, while they lived a comfortable life at home with their younger kids, Alexis, Lana and Landon.

But behind the front door of their $2.5 million six-bedroom home in California's exclusive Orange County, things were harder than they appeared.

Years earlier, Brad and Andra had gone through a bitter divorce, following the tragic death by drowning of their daughter Sabrina.

But, in time, they'd reconciled, though they'd never remarried.

Next, Brad was diagnosed with an aggressive form of Parkinson's disease.

Andra planned on scaling back the business in order to care for him.

But worse was to come.

In the early hours of 9 February 2014, Brad and Andra's 17-year-old daughter Alexis made a panicked call to emergency services, saying she had heard gunshots.

Arriving, police found a scene of sheer carnage.

Brad and Andra were dead in their bed, their bodies riddled with bullets.

And the bloodbath didn't stop there.

Landon, 8, was also shot, and desperately ill.

Only Lana, 15, and Alexis remained unhurt, a bullet having narrowly missed Alexis as she hid under the covers.

While police investigated, Myles, 21, and Ashton, 19, flew back from their college.

In shock, they kept a vigil at little Landon's hospital bed, grieving.

The boys offered the police the names of their parents' former business associates who may have held a grudge.

But would a shady business deal really inspire such a malicious, brutal crime?

The family were so scared that the killer might return, there was even security at Brad and Andra's funeral.

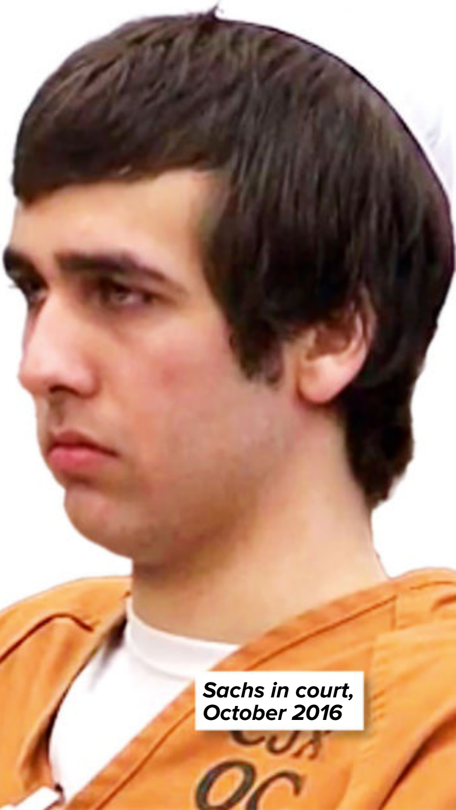
It was an emotional service, and Ashton paid tribute to his parents, crying hysterically.

'I remember in fifth grade,' he said. 'We had to do a report on who our hero was to us, but even as a 13-year-old boy, I knew right away my hero was my mom.'

Calling Brad and Andra 'the perfect team', he said, 'The most important thing to them was just the family.'

He added, 'They just loved all of us so much.'

Now, it was down to Ashton and his older



Sachs in court, October 2016

WORDS: SARAH WHITELEY. PHOTOS: ALAMY, AP/SHUTTERSTOCK, GETTY

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Brad was fighting a serious illness

Andra wanted to look after Brad

The family lived in Orange County

brother Myles to step up, and they made moves to get custody of their younger siblings, including Landon, whose injuries had left him paralysed.

They were a credit to their late parents.

Or so it seemed.

Because as the police investigated, they discovered a troubling clue.

In Ashton's car, they found a semi-automatic weapon.

As they probed further, phone records showed that on the night of the killings, Ashton had been in Orange County rather than at his Seattle college, where he'd told officers he was.

And when the police offered him the chance to give his side of the story, he made a shocking confession.

Ashton had been the shooter.

'I don't have a reason why. Just a lot of problems,' he told them.

As more details emerged, it seemed Ashton's tendency towards violence had been there for years.

When he was younger, he was found with a knife in school.

He also shot animals and birds.

Growing up, Ashton had been full of resentment towards his parents, believing that he was the least favourite child.

He'd stopped going to school and spent more time smoking marijuana and playing video games.

On his phone, police found a number of articles on murder and an insanity defence.

He admitted that he'd been planning the shooting for four or five days.

Finally, on 8 February, he drove 20 hours from college to his parents' mansion, scaled the wall, then let himself in and started to shoot.

Afterwards, he took a flight and was back in Seattle the following morning when news of the murders broke.

'I hugged him and told him to let me know if he needed anything,' Ashton's high-school friend remembered afterwards. 'I gave him a hug after he killed them.'

Ashton originally pleaded not guilty to two counts of murder and two counts of attempted murder, but in the run-up to the trial, he dismissed his public defender and announced he'd defend himself.

Then, on 20 September 2016, Ashton, then 22, changed his plea to guilty.

He had been full of resentment towards his parents

Only one member of his family – his aunt and Brad's sister, Lisa McGowan – attended.

'You had a choice, Ashton,' she told him directly. 'You had apparently been thinking about what you were going to do for a long time. I've been told by my friends and family that I need to forgive you. Well, I can't forgive you today.'

A representative for Myles, now guardian to his surviving siblings, read out a letter in which he thanked the police and prosecutors but made no mention of Ashton or his atrocious actions.

For his crimes, Ashton Sachs received four consecutive life sentences without the possibility of parole, as well as an additional 100 years for use of a firearm.

Judge Gregg Prickett clearly wanted to ensure there was no way Ashton was ever getting out of prison.

'The defendant is a sociopath,' Orange County Senior Deputy District Attorney Mike Murray said at Sach's sentencing. 'He has no remorse or empathy. All he cares about is himself.'

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